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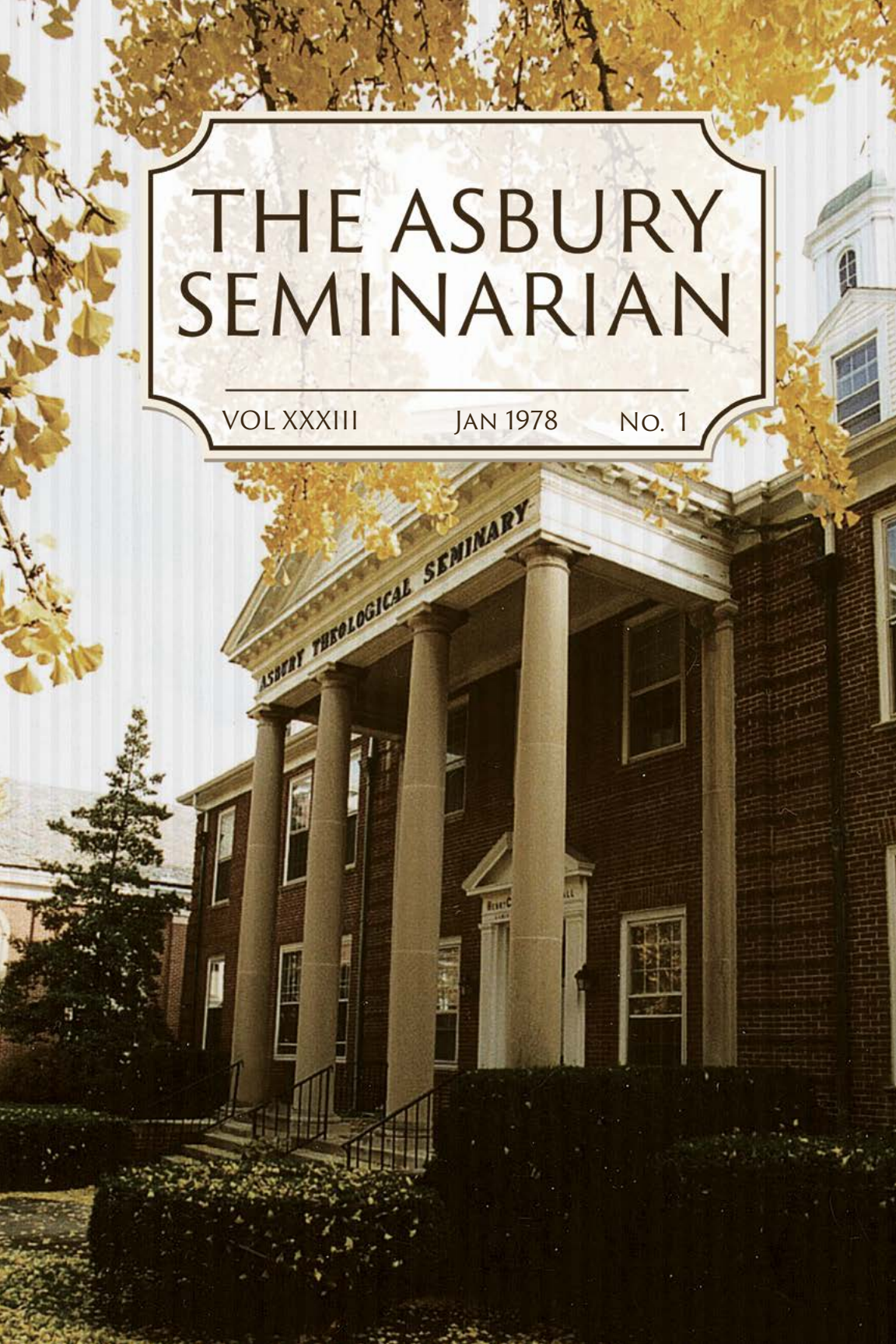

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The Wesleyan Message in the Life and Thought of Today

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IN THIS ISSUE

The purpose of this publication is to serve as an organ of Asbury Theological Seminary for the dissemination of material of interest and value primarily to its immediate constituency of alumni, students and friends, but also to a broader readership of churchmen, theologians, students and other interested persons.

Material published in this journal appears here because of its intrinsic value in the on-going discussion of theological issues. While this publication does not pretend to compete with those theological journals specializing in articles of technical scholarship, it affirms a commitment to rigorous standards of academic integrity and prophetic forthrightness.

Introduction to This Issue

by Frank Bateman Stanger

In this issue of *The Asbury Seminarian,* we are pleased to present parts one and two of the Asbury Theological Seminary 1977-78 Ryan Lectures. These were delivered by the Rev. Dr. Howard A. Snyder, a graduate of the Seminary, now serving as Executive Director of Light and Life Men International of The Free Methodist Church. The scholarly lectures were delivered in the field of Church History and Missions under the general topic, "John Wesley and the Radical Protestant Tradition."

Part three of this series will appear in a future issue of *The Asbury Seminarian.*

Purpose

In 1964 the Ryan Lectureship was established at Asbury Theological Seminary in order to enable the institution to bring to its campus each year an outstanding Christian scholar as guest academic lecturer. These scholars are chosen from among the several disciplines of theological education, and lecture within their areas of academic expertise.

During the years of the Ryan Lectureship, the students of the Seminary have been afforded unusual intellectual stimulation and academic breadth as further preparation for their own future ministries.

The Donors

The Ryan Lectureship has been provided by the Rev. Dr. and Mrs. Lowell O. Ryan of Corpus Christi, Texas.

Dr. Ryan is an ordained minister of The United Methodist Church and served as pastor of local churches in the Southwest Texas Annual Conference for 31 years, and as a District Superintendent for six years. He was educated at Victoria College, Southwestern

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Dr. Frank Bateman Stanger is President of Asbury Theological Seminary.

University, and Perkins School of Theology.

Intense evangelistic emphasis always characterized Dr. Ryan's ministry. He has served as evangelist in his own annual conference, and in conferences, churches, and camp meetings in many states. While pastor in Corpus Christi, he established and conducted "The Gulf Coast Gospel Hour" heard on radio every Sunday for eight years.

Asbury Theological Seminary honored Dr. Ryan in 1956 by conferring upon him the degree of Doctor of Divinity. He was elected to the Board of Trustees of the Seminary in 1962, and in 1968 was elected chairman. He served in that position for six years.

In 1971 Dr. Ryan retired from active pastoral ministry to become a regional representative for Asbury Theological Seminary in the Texas-New Mexico area.

Mrs. Ryan, co-sponsor of the Lectureship, is the former June Bissel of Giddings, Texas. Through the years of Dr. Ryan's active ministry in United Methodist churches, she was exceedingly active in all phases of church work and made a significant spiritual contribution, wherever they served.

Dr. and Mrs. Ryan are the parents of two sons and a daughter: Michael Lynn, Timothy Lowell and Carolyn, all married. The Ryans are also proud grandparents.

Asbury Theological Seminary salutes Dr. and Mrs. Ryan for their dedicated and generous commitment to our institution and for their constant good works on our behalf.

Rev. Dr. and Mrs. Lowell O. Ryan of Corpus Christi, Texas.

The Making of a Radical Protestant

by Howard A. Snyder

"In religion I am for as few innovations as possible. I love the old wine best."[1]

The words are those of John Wesley, one of the greatest innovators in Church history. Although Wesley had turned 86 when he penned the remark in a letter from Dublin, the words are not just the reaction of a crusty old gentleman. Wesley could have said the same thing 50 years earlier.

The remark is, in fact, characteristic of Wesley's whole ecclesiology. The key words are "as possible." Hold to the old. But if the old hinders the Gospel, then changes and innovations become imperative. Such a view implies a working synthesis of old and new, tradition and innovation. Wesley's ecclesiology was precisely such a synthesis.

By any standards, John Wesley was a remarkable man. His life (1703-1791) very nearly spanned the eighteenth century. From the time he began "field preaching" until his death he traveled some 225,000 miles and preached more than 40,000 times, sometimes to crowds of more than 20,000.[2] Membership in the Methodist societies totaled nearly 26,000 in 1767, and at Wesley's death he left behind 72,000 Methodists in Great Britain and Ireland, and a fledgling Methodist denomination in America of some 57,000 members.[3] According to Vulliamy, Wesley was the "ascendant personality" of his age, and more widely known in America than any Englishman of the time.[4]

But the reasons for studying Wesley today are more pressing and pragmatic than merely historical curiosity. Wesley's role in bringing spiritual renewal to a rapidly industrializing society, and his understanding and practice of Christian discipleship suggest some apects of his continuing relevance.[5]

If anything, Wesley is more significant for today than for any period since the eighteenth century. He is important — and often cited — as an example of warm-hearted evangelism combined with

active social reform. A growing awareness of his historical significance is evidenced by Bernard Semmel's 1973 book, *The Methodist Revolution,* and by the Sixth Oxford Institute of Methodist Theological Studies focusing on "Sanctification and Liberation" in July, 1977.

I also see evidence of a rising appreciation of Wesley today *precisely as a theologian.* Many of us have been somewhat apologetic about Wesley's theological work, saying that, after all, Wesley did not attempt to write a systematic theology. This is true. But perhaps this is Wesley's strength, not his weakness. Theologians, of course, especially admire other theologians who have neat and profound systems. I suspect that Calvin's theological reputation rests too greatly on the fact that Calvin was a great logical systematizer. Therefore other theologians like to study him, great literature on Calvinism exists, and Wesley has been considered a second-rate theologian. We have been too content to say, "As a theologian, Wesley was a great revivalist!"

But today two new-but-old truths are dawning on us as Christians. First, theology must be related to life. Theology must be tied to *praxis* and grow out of *praxis,* as the Latin American theologians have been insisting. Secondly, theology is not just the work of "theologians," but is the work of the whole Body of Christ. All Christians are called to be "theologians," if by that we mean all Christians are to be literate about the Biblical faith and know how to apply that faith intelligently to all of life. We are on the verge of a fuller recovery of the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers.

For these and other reasons, I believe Wesley's reputation *as a theologian* is growing, and will grow. As Skevington Wood recently wrote,

> The stature of John Wesley as a theologian is being increasingly recognized today. For too long it has been assumed that the founder of Methodism was mainly a man of action and only minimally a man of constructive thought. Recent years, however, have witnessed a radical reappraisal of his theological role, which in its turn has required that the nature of his distinctive doctrinal emphasis should be taken into serious consideration.[5a]

In these articles I wish to discuss Wesley both as practitioner and

as theologian. For in Wesley, theology and practice were really one. From the beginning, his theological work was addressed to practical questions, and he most earnestly cared that his practice be grounded in sound doctrine.

Since graduating from seminary in 1966, I have become increasingly convinced that *ecclesiology* — the doctrine of the Church — is crucially important to evangelical faith. The growing emphasis today on discipleship, lifestyle, church growth, and similar concerns further confirms this conviction. We are coming to see that *soteriology* devoid of a Biblical *ecclesiology* cannot really be Biblical. The crucial question today is: What is the shape of our corporate life as the people of God in the world?

Wesley can help us precisely at these points. So we are going to look at him — not so much as Wesley the Anglican, but as Wesley the Free Churchman; Wesley the Radical Protestant. We are going to confront questions raised by the contemporary reappraisal of the Radical Reformation and the current resurgence of Anabaptist and other Radical Protestant studies. Our aim will be, first, to understand Wesley better by looking at him from an angle too little examined and, secondly, to make some applications to the contemporary situation of the Church.

To raise the question of Wesley's theory and practice of the Church is almost unavoidably to raise the question of Radical Protestantism, or of the Radical Reformation. With the Radical Reformers, and especially with the Anabaptists, the question of the meaning of the Church was a central issue — so much so that Franklin Littell entitled his ground-breaking study of Anabaptism, *The Anabaptist View of the Church.* The Radical Reformers wanted to carry the Reformation clear through to a radical restructuring of the life and experience of the Christian community. So did John Wesley. Thus Wesley must be seen as standing, at least to some degree, within the Radical Protestant tradition. The point of these articles is to answer the question, to what degree is this so?

George H. Williams has given currency to the term "Radical Reformation" through his 1962 book, *The Radical Reformation.* He includes Anabaptists, Spiritualists and Evangelical Rationalists within the term "Radical Reformation," and points out that these movements constituted a genuine third option in the sixteenth century. The classical or Magisterial Reformation saw itself as battling decadent Roman Catholicism on the one hand and the

Radicals on the other. Largely because the mainline Reformers had the upper hand politically, the Radical Reformers had received a "bad press" for four centuries. The irony is that today many Protestants find themselves asking essentially the same questions the Anabaptists asked — and, in attempting to be Biblical, often find themselves coming to similar conclusions. There is growing awareness that the questions of discipleship, lifestyle, Gospel obedience and the shape of the Church are crucial. Williams reminds us that today "Christians of many denominations are finding themselves constitutionally and in certain other ways closer to the descendants of the despised sectaries of the Reformation Era than to the classical defenders of a reformed *corpus christianum.*"[5b]

It is from this perspective that we come to look at John Wesley and his understanding of the Church.

Wesley's view of the Church was integral to his ministry and practice. Frank Baker notes, "He did not attempt to formulate a new doctrine of the church but to remedy its decadence."[6] But his ministry of renewal forced him continually to deal with ecclesiological questions. As Ernest Stoeffler notes, "Like Augustine and Luther he was predominantly a man of action whose theology was fashioned on the anvil of practical issues which had to be met. Hence, we find in him a progressive change, if not in theological substance, then at least in the placing of accents and the making of emphases."[7]

Wesley's ecclesiology has been variously described as Catholic, Anglican, Classical Protestant, Puritan, and Free Church — and, as Stoeffler comments, "enough passages can be found in John Wesley's many writings which will support [any] one or all of these interpretations."[8] Yet his ministry led to the formation of one of the largest of the Free Churches, and Wesley is, therefore, frequently seen as standing in the Free Church tradition.[9]

These articles will seek to describe Wesley's conception of the Church and to determine to what degree Wesley may be considered representative of the Free Church or Believers' Church tradition. To what extent does Wesley stand in continuity with that stream of Radical Protestantism whose major source is sixteenth-century Anabaptism, but which is represented also in a broad range of "free church" or "believers' church" groups? The concern here is both to note direct historical links and to compare Wesley to a Believers' Church model or typology. We will be dealing not specifically with sixteenth-century Anabaptism, but with the Radical Protestant

perspective on the Church which issues primarily, but not exclusively, from Anabaptism. I am using "Believers' Church" and "Radical Protestant" as virtually synonymous descriptive terms to designate this perspective. Such usage finds precedent and justification in the title and content of Donald Durnbaugh's significant study, *The Believer's Church: The History and Character of Radical Protestantism.*[10]

Wesley's contacts with the Moravian Brethren during the critical period of his spiritual quest are well known. Because these contacts were so important both for Wesley's faith and for his practice and ministry (and thus his ecclesiology), and because of the Believers' Church character of the Moravians, it will be helpful to review the history of these contacts in some detail as background for the typological comparison. My other two articles will focus on Wesley's view of the Church, and will present a comparison of his views with the Believers' Church typology.

The years 1738 to 1740 were the critical ones in John Wesley's religious experience and in the beginning of the Methodist movement. They also mark the period of Wesley's most intimate contact with the Moravian Brethren. Four crises, in particular, may be identified during this period:

1) Wesley's sense of failure on returning from America in February, 1738.
2) Wesley's "heart-warming experience" on May 24, 1738.
3) The decision to begin field preaching in April, 1739.
4) The break with the Fetter Lane Society on July 20, 1740.

These crises and their outcome largely determined the direction of Wesley's ministry for the remainder of his life, and also had their impact on his understanding of the Church.

Background, 1725-37

It may be said that Wesley's religious quest began in 1725. Urged by his father,[11] he began to study for ordination. The direction of his quest was clear from the beginning: he "began to aim at, and pray for inward holiness."[12] He sought holiness in every area of life and began his lifelong custom of weekly communion.[13]

Wesley was ordained deacon in September, 1725, and ordained priest in July, 1728. In the intervening years he was elected a fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford (1726), and received his Master of Arts degree (1727). Wesley read extensively during this period, and was

attracted toward mysticism. He read William Law's *Serious Call to A Devout and Holy Life* shortly after it was published in 1728. Vulliamy notes that "the *Serious Call* played its part in confirming the habits of personal discipline and of pious exclusion which marked the life of Wesley at Oxford from 1729 to 1735" and strengthened his mystical leanings "until the Moravian example gave to Wesley's life an essentially practical tendency."[14]

Wesley was at Oxford almost constantly from 1729 until 1735. He quickly became the leader of the "Holy Club" which his brother Charles had organized there with two others. This religious call grew and was active until John and Charles left for Georgia in 1735; one of the members was George Whitefield. The club "was neither more nor less than a society of very young and very earnest High Churchmen, with evangelistic views and a true desire to lead the lives of exemplary Christians,"[15] notes Vulliamy. Its primary aim was the spiritual development of its members. Wesley wrote to his father in 1734, "My one aim in life is to secure personal holiness, for without being holy myself I cannot promote real holiness in others."[16] Good works were an expression of this desire for holiness: visiting prisoners and poor families, and helping them with financial aid and school classes for children.[17]

The Holy Club observed a strict discipline which John Wesley himself devised. Vulliamy gives this description:

> The members of the Club spent an hour, morning and evening, in private prayer. At nine, twelve and three o'clock they recited a collect, and at all times they examined themselves closely, watching for signs of grace, and trying to preserve a high degree of religious fervour. They made use of pious ejaculations, they frequently consulted their Bibles, and they noted, in cipher diaries, all the particulars of their daily employment. One hour each day was set apart for meditation. . . . They fasted twice a week, observed all the feasts of the Church, and received the Sacraments every Sunday. Before going into company they prepared their conversation, so that words might not be spoken without purpose. The Primitive Church, in so far as they had knowledge of it, was to be taken as their pattern.[18]

Small wonder that Wesley and his companions were derisively

called "Methodists" (not a new term), "Sacramentarians," "Enthusiasts," "Bible Moths," the "Reforming Club," and the "Supererogation Men." The name "Holy Club" was apparently most popular among Oxford students, but the term "Methodist" was the one that stuck permanently to Wesley.[19]

Wesley himself lived a very spartan existence at Oxford. He lived on 28 pounds a year, giving away all he did not need for clothing and sustenance. In one year he gave away 62 pounds; in another, 92.[20] All in all, one sees in Wesley many traits which were to accompany him all his life.

John and Charles went to London in 1735, and there met Colonel Oglethorpe who was organizing a group to go to Georgia. The Wesleys agreed to go along, John as a missionary to the Indians. They soon set sail for the New World; the Holy Club at Oxford soon disintegrated.

Wesley's first close contact with the Moravians was on board ship to Georgia. He noted in his Journal,

> At seven I went to the Germans [Moravians]. I had long before observed the great seriousness of their behaviour. Of their humility they had given a continual proof, by performing those servile offices for the other passengers which none of the English would undertake; . . . If they were pushed, struck, or thrown down, they rose again and went away; but no complaint was found in their mouth.[21]

What impressed Wesley was not only the Moravians' piety and good works, but their calm assurance of faith during storms at sea, an assurance he lacked. During his three years in Georgia he maintained close contact with the Moravians, including the missionary, Spangenberg.

In his Georgian ministry, Wesley's zeal for holiness became "a burning desire to revitalize the Church" and build "a model Christian community in one Anglican parish."[22] Understandably, the rigor of his efforts was not universally appreciated. Already, however, he was introducing such innovations as hymn-singing in public worship and the use of lay men and women in parish work.[23] Because of his zeal and his innovations he was accused, says Baker, of "leaving the Church of England by two doors at the same time" — Roman Catholicism and Puritan Separatism. But his experiments were

actually "in large measure the results of his attempt to return to the spirit and behaviour of the primitive church."[24]

Wesley thought he saw in the Moravians some elements, at least, of authentic primitive church life, and he followed some of their methods. Thus Baker notes,

> Most important of all, both in Savannah and Frederica, Wesley organized societies for religious fellowship quite apart from ordered public worship. In these gatherings the members spent about an hour in 'prayer, singing and mutual exhortation,' naturally under the close supervision whenever possible of their spiritual director . . . . Wesley even divided these societies into the 'more intimate union' of 'bands' after the Moravian pattern. It was this which readily fostered the charge of his having instituted a Roman Catholic confessional, for mutual confession was indeed one of the purposes of these small homogeneous groups.[25]

Wesley returned to England in early 1738, arriving in London on February 3. He returned amid controversy, considering his missionary efforts a failure. He had been unable to make contact with the Indians. He had stirred up opposition and controversy among the Anglican settlers. And he knew he lacked inward peace of soul.

Encounter with Peter Böhler, 1738

The Moravian Brethren under Count Zinzendorf were themselves an infant movement in 1738, but already they had contacts in England. The Moravian historian Holmes relates,

> At a very early period after the Renewal of their Church, the Brethren formed pleasing acquaintances in England. To meet the wishes of some persons in London, who desired information of the establishment at Herrnhut, a deputation was sent thither in 1728.[26]

In 1734 a group of Moravian missionaries arrived in London to secure permission from the Trustees of Georgia to go to America for the sake of religious liberty and "an opportunity of preaching the gospel."[27] A second group of 26 arrived in 1735; it was this group

which sailed with the Wesleys to Georgia.[28] Zinzendorf himself visited England in 1737 and organized a Moravian "Diaspora Society" in London.[29]

When Wesley returned to London in 1738, he soon encountered another Moravian missionary, Peter Böhler. Under date of February 7, Wesley recorded in his Journal,

> A day much to be rememberd. At the house of Mr. Weinantz, . . . I met Peter Böhler [and others], just then landed from Germany. Finding they had no acquaintance in England, I offered to procure them a lodging; and did so, near Mr. Hutton's, where I then was.[30]

Peter Böhler (1712-1775), 25 when Wesley met him, was an effective Bändhalter, or Band-organizer, for the Moravians. Formerly a Lutheran, he had become acquainted with the Moravians while studying at the University of Jena, and spent his life in Moravian missionary work in America and England.[31]

Wesley must have been impressed with Böhler on two counts: his convincing presentation of instantaneous conversion by faith alone, and his practical organizing skill. In many ways, including his erudition, he was a man much like Wesley. Wesley walked and talked frequently with Böhler from the time of his first encounter until Böhler's departure for America on May 4. Both John and Charles accompanied Böhler to Oxford on February 17, but they were puzzled by Böhler's views. Böhler wrote Zinzendorf, "I traveled with the two brothers, John and Charles Wesley, from London to Oxford. The elder, John, is a good-natured man; he knew he did not properly believe on the Saviour, and was willing to be taught."[32]

Böhler spent some days at Oxford and organized a Band there. Wesley had further discussions with him both there and later at London. In March Wesley recorded, "I was, on Sunday the fifth, clearly convinced of unbelief; of the want of that faith whereby alone we are saved."[33]

About this time Wesley began a worship practice which was later much criticized as an irregularity: extemporaneous prayer. He noted on April 1,

> being at Mr. Fox's society [at Oxford], my heart was so full that I could not confine myself to the forms of prayer which

> we are accustomed to use there. Neither do I purpose to be confined to them any more; but to pray indifferently with a form or without as I may find suitable to particular occasions.[34]

During these weeks Wesley was seeking the true understanding and experience of salvation by faith. He went back to reread the New Testament in Greek, and discovered that instantaneous conversions did indeed take place in the New Testament church. He talked with Böhler again on April 26, and Böhler later recorded, "He wept bitterly and asked me to pray with him. I can freely affirm, that he is a poor, broken-hearted sinner, hungering after a better righteousness than that which he had thus far had, even the righteousness of Christ."[35] Böhler reported that Wesley was one among several who were seeking a closer fellowship "and want therefore to begin a Band."[36]

On May 1, Wesley records, "This evening our little Society began, which afterwards met in Fetter Lane."[37] This was the beginning of the Fetter Lane Society (more will be said about it shortly), which seems to have been organized by Wesley at the advice of Böhler.

Wesley "broke the faith barrier" (as one has written[38]) on Wednesday, May 24, about three weeks after Böhler departed for America. This was his famous heart-warming experience during a meeting in Aldersgate Street, an experience which Wesley himself saw as the critical turning-point in his own spiritual quest. "I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me, that He had taken away *my* sins, even *mine,* and saved *me* from the law of sin and death."

The Fetter Lane Society

James Hutton (1715-1795) seems to have been a key figure both in the Aldersgate Street group and in the Fetter Lane Society, and was an important link between Wesley and the Moravians. He had been converted under John Wesley's preaching *before* Wesley went to Georgia. The Wesley's often stayed in the Hutton home, and his home and bookshop, "The Bible and Sun," became a chief point of contact between the Wesleys and Moravians passing through London or living there.[39] Hutton had organized a little group which met on Wednesday evenings in Aldersgate Street to hear the correspondence and diaries from Georgia read.[40] It seems likely this

was the meeting Wesley attended on May 24.

Religious "societies" were very common in England at this period, and had been for some time, going back to Anthony Horneck in 1678.[41] The Fetter Lane Society, as well as the Holy Club and numerous other societies Wesley formed or was involved in, should be seen in this context. But the Fetter Lane Society was also markedly Moravian in inspiration, due especially to the influence of Peter Böhler.

Precisely who organized and drew up the rules for this society — Wesley or Böhler — is unclear, but they both had a hand in it. Bowmer is right that "Fetter Lane was not a Moravian Society, but a Religious Society in connexion with the Church of England."[42] But it was precisely Zinzendorf's dream to organize a network of such societies throughout the main bodies of the Church, without separating from them, and this would have been Böhler's intent. Lewis in *Zinzendorf the Ecumenical Pioneer* says Böhler himself drew up the rules for the society at James Hutton's house, while R. A. Knox in *Enthusiasm: A Chapter in the History of Religion* says Fetter Lane "was not a Moravian institution."[43] The truth seems to be that John and Charles Wesley, Hutton, Böhler, and a few others met at Hutton's home on the evening of May 1 and there organized the society at Böhler's suggestion.[44] The society formed, in Wesley's words, "In obedience to the command of God, by St. James, and by the advice of Peter Böhler,"[45] and the rules of the society were later printed with the title, "Orders of a Religious Society, meeting in Fetter Lane; in obedience to the command of God by St. James, and by the advice of Peter Böhler, 1738."[46]

Addison considers that "the formal organization" of the Fetter Lane Society "marks the definite crystallization of the London group in the Herrnhut mold," and yet "the system was thoroughly suited to the genius of nascent Methodist organization," which took over many of its principles.[47] The society's rules included weekly meetings for prayer and confession, division into bands of five to ten persons each, the right and duty of each person to speak freely, procedures for admitting new members, and provision for a monthly love feast from 7:00 to 10:00 p.m.[48] An agreed financial contribution was collected monthly.[49] Though Wesley could not have forseen it, the Fetter Lane Society was to become the "seed-plot of the British Moravian Church, an *ecclesiola* which became an *ecclesia*."[50]

Wesley now had a new-found assurance of faith, a supportive

group to share his life with, and an expanding preaching ministry. He must have seen that now, finally, his dream of a significant restoration of primitive Christianity within the Church of England was possible. He wanted to learn more, however, from the Continental Moravians and other Pietists, and so on June 7 he "determined, if God should permit, to retire for a short time into Germany. I had fully proposed before I left Georgia so to do. . . ."[51]

Stoeffler calls Wesley's trip to Germany an "intentional study-tour of Pietist centers." Says Stoeffler,

> He was not interested in learning any more about the nature of Moravian piety. . . . He had come to regard the life of faith which he had witnessed among the Moravians, and which he had now found himself, in the same light as did the Moravians. . . . To them the corporate aspect of conscious religious renewal through "living faith" signified, as it were, a recapturing of the life of faith of the primitive Christian community. Their diaspora societies, therefore, were interpreted as nothing more and nothing less than a very much needed means of restoring koinonia, the spirit, the message, and the sense of mission of that community within a given religious establishment, and of doing so without the need of disrupting the order of that establishment. What his study-trip to the Continent did for Wesley, then, was to afford him an opportunity to see the diaspora arangement of the Moravians (as well as the *collegio pietatis* of church-related Pietism in general) in actual operation. Thus he now became fully aware of the possibilities of this arrangement for his own work as he began to envision that work.[52]

Thus Wesley's conversion gave him "a new vision of the religious life" while his trip to Germany provided "a look at a new model," not found in his own tradition, by means of which "his newly found religious experience, reproduced in others, could become an integral part of his inherited understanding of the church."[53]

Wesley went to the continent in June, 1738, met Zinzendorf at Marieborn, and reached Herrnhut on August 1. He spent some days at Herrnhut and other centers. He returned to London on September 16 and the next day recorded, "I began again to declare in my own country the glad tidings of salvation."[54] In October he wrote a letter

to "the Church of God which is in Hernhuth" which reveals both his appreciation for the Moravians and his growing ministry:

> We are endeavoring here also, by the grace which is given us, to be followers of you, as ye are of Christ. Fourteen were added to us, since our return, so that we have now eight bands of men, consisting of 56 persons; all of whom seek for salvation only in the blood of Christ. As yet we have only two small bands of women; the one of three, the other of five persons. But here are many others who only wait till we have leisure to instruct them, how they may most effectively build up one another in the faith and love of Him who gave himself for them.
>
> Though my brother and I are not permitted to preach in most of the churches in London, yet (thanks be to God!) there are others left, wherein we have liberty to speak the truth as it is in Jesus. Likewise every evening, and on set evenings in the week at two several places, we publish the word of reconciliation, sometimes to 20 or 30, sometimes to 50 or 60, sometimes to 300 or 400 persons, met together to hear it.[55]

Wesley came back from the Continent with a great appreciation for Moravian faith and piety, but also with "a growing uneasiness about their 'quietism,' their tendencies toward spiritual complacency and the personality cult which had grown up around Count Zinzendorf."[56] He threw himself immediately into itinerant evangelism and care of converts in the London area, and seems initially to have assumed the primary leadership of the Fetter Lane Society, with James Hutton as his chief lieutenant.[57]

Two early 1739 entries in Wesley's Journal suggest something of the nature of the embryonic renewal:

> Monday, January 1, 1739. Mr. Hall, Kinchin, Ingham, Whitefield, Hutchins, and my brother Charles, were present at our love feast in Fetter Lane, with about 60 of our brethren. About three in the morning, as we were continuing instant in prayer, the power of God came mightily upon us, inasmuch that many cried out for exceeding joy, and many

> fell to the ground. As soon as we were recovered a little from that awe and amazement at the presence of his Majesty, we broke out with one voice, "We praise thee, O God, we acknowledge thee to be the Lord."[58]
>
> March 14, London. During my stay here, I was fully employed, between our own Society in Fetter Lane, and many others, where I was continually desired to expound.[59]

Beginning of Field Preaching, 1739

George Whitefield, present at Fetter Lane on January 1, had just returned from America. He was soon barred from London pulpits, and went to Bristol. There on February 17 he preached for the first time in the open air to about 200 colliers at Kingswood. Within three weeks the crowds had grown to as high as 10,000, and Whitefield called on Wesley for help.[60]

The busy port city of Bristol, 100 miles west of London, was the second city in the Kingdom in Wesley's day, numbering about 30,000 inhabitants.[61] It also stood close to the Welsh border and was the center of the coal mining industry which fed England's booming industrial revolution.

Whitefield seems to have been drawn to the Bristol area for three reasons. In the first place, he was from this area, his native city being Gloucester, near the Welsh border north of Bristol. Secondly, Whitefield was in touch with Howell Harris, leader of the Welsh revival which had broken out some years earlier.[62] The third significant fact is that turmoil and rioting had broken out among the coal miners of the region, particularly at Kingswood. Halévey notes, "The Kingswood miners had risen. On 19 January, after the arrest of two of their leaders, the assistance of soldiers was necessary to get the two prisoners away in the face of all the mobbing women and amid a barrage of stones. On 17 February, Whitefield came to Kingswood."[63] The disturbances around Bristol were part of a larger pattern of unrest during the period 1738-1740 related to high corn prices, low wages, and the impoverished condition of the new class of urban workers. Bernard Semmel notes, "The years 1739 and 1740, when Methodism erupted, were especially bad years, but there were intermittent food riots throughout the century. . . . the Kingswood miners . . . were regularly a source of difficulty."[64]

Whitefield had immediate success at Bristol, especially among the

Kingswood colliers. A notice in *The Gentleman's Magazine* for March, 1739, reads:

> *Bristol.* The Rev. Mr. Whitefield, . . . has been wonderfully laborious and successful, especially among the poor Prisoners in Newgate, and the rude Colliers of Kingswood, preaching every day to large audiences, visiting, and expounding to religious Societies. On Saturday the eighteenth Instant he preach'd at Hannum Mount to five or six thousand Persons, amongst them many Colliers. In the Evening he removed to the Common, where . . . were crowded . . . so great a Multitude . . . computed at 20,000 People . . . .[65]

Whitefield's efforts did not go unnoticed — or uncriticized — in London. One gentleman warned,

> The Industry of the inferior People in a Society is the great Source of its Prosperity. But if one Man, like the Rev. Mr. Whitefield should have it in his Power, by his Preaching, to detain five or six thousands of the Vulgar from their daily Labour, what a Loss, in a little Time, may this bring to the Publick! — For my part, I shall expect to hear of a prodigious Rise in the Price of Coals, about the City of Bristol, if this Gentleman proceeds, as he has begun, with his charitable Lectures to the Colliers of Kingswood.[66]

Whitefield knew of Wesley's organizing skills, and of his effectiveness as a preacher. But until now Wesley in England had preached only in regular church services. Should he now respond to Whitefield's appeal and assist in the open-air meetings at Bristol? Charles thought he should not, but finally the Fetter Lane Society agreed he should go.

Wesley records,

> Saturday, March 31st, in the evening I reached Bristol, and met Mr. Whitefield there. I could scarce reconcile myself at first to this strange way of preaching in the fields, of which he set me an example on Sunday; having been all my life (until very lately) so tenacious of every point relating to

> decency and order that I should have thought the saving of souls almost a sin, if it had not been done in a church.[67]

Sunday evening Wesley spoke to a little society on the Sermon on the Mount — "one pretty remarkable precedent of field preaching," he observed, "though I suppose there were churches at that time also."[68] The next day, Monday, April 2, Wesley reports:

> At four in the afternoon, I submitted to be more vile and proclaimed in the highways the glad tidings of salvation, speaking from a little eminence in a ground adjoining the city to about three thousand people. The Scripture on which I spoke was this: . . . "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor." [69]

Wesley began immediately to organize. He formed a number of societies and on May 9 acquired a piece of property where he built his "New Room" as a central meeting place.[70] Whitefield returned to America in August, and Wesley was left in charge of the growing movement. He divided his time between Bristol and London, concentrating on open air preaching, organizing, and speaking in the evenings to an increasing number of societies.

Wesley's Organization

Within a period of months Wesley had established the basic organizational patterns which were to characterize Methodism throughout his lifetime. These patterns reveal something of Wesley's own understanding of the Church. Wesley himself gave a concise explanation of how these forms developed in a 1748 letter which he called "A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists."[71]

The Society. Wesley's first converts in London in 1739 wanted to meet with him regularly, and he was ready to do so. As numbers increased he quickly saw he could not visit them all individually in their homes; so he told them, "If you will all of you come together every Thursday, in the evening, I will gladly spend some time with you in prayer, and give you the best advice I can." Wesley comments,

> Thus arose, without any previous design on either side, what was afterwards called *a Society*; a very innocent name, and

> very common in London, for any number of people associating themselves together . . . . They therefore united themselves 'in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they might help each other to work out their salvation.'
>
> There is one only condition previously required in those who desire admission into this society, — 'a desire to flee from the wrath to come, to be saved from their sins.'[72]

Wesley organized dozens of such societies in the London and Bristol areas. All the groups together were called the United Societies. The main structural difference between these Methodist societies and the many other similar societies then functioning was that these were directly under the control of Wesley, and were united together chiefly in his person. Wesley was, of course, still meeting at this time with the Fetter Lane Society.

Of the rise of the Methodist societies Wesley says characteristically, "Upon reflection, I could not but observe, This is the very thing which was from the beginning of Christianity."[73]

The Bands. Of all Wesley's innovations, the Bands seem most directly traceable to Moravian influence. Baker notes, "On Wesley's return from his pilgrimage to Herrnhut he had enthusiastically advocated the system of 'bands' for all the religious societies in London, including that in Fetter Lane."[74]

The Bands were small cells of men or women, and the purpose was pastoral. New converts were beset with temptations and needed both encouragement and opportunity for confesson. Wesley says,

> These, therefore, wanted some means of closer union; they wanted to pour out their hearts without reserve, particularly with regard to the sin which did still easily beset them, and the temptations which were most apt to prevail over them. And they were the more desirous of this, when they observed it was the express advice of an inspired writer: 'Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed.'
>
> In compliance with their desire, I divided them into smaller companies; putting the married or single men, and married

or single women, together.[75]

A list of rules for Band Societies was drawn up as early as December, 1738.[76] Thus, the Bands actually preceded both the organized Methodist societies and the class meetings.

The Class Meeting. The Wesleyan class meeting arose in Bristol in early 1742, and somewhat by accident. Wesley was increasingly concerned that many Methodists did not live the Gospel; "several grew cold, and gave way to sins which had long easily beset them." Clearly some mechanism for exercising discipline was needed.

To meet the preaching-house debt in Bristol, the society there (now numbering over 1,100) was divided into "classes" of a dozen each. Leaders were appointed to secure weekly contributions toward the debt, and Wesley asked the leaders also to "make a particular inquiry into the behaviour of those whom he saw weekly."[77] This provided the opportunity for exercising the discipline. Thus, says Wesley,

> As soon as possible, the same method was used in London and all other places. Evil men were detected, and reproved. They were borne with for a season. If they forsook their sins, we received them gladly; if they obstinately persisted therein, it was openly declared that they were not of us. The rest mourned and prayed for them, and yet rejoiced, that, as far as in us lay, the scandal was rolled away from the society.[78]

At first the class leaders visited the members in their homes, but this proved to be too time consuming and somewhat complicated for several reasons. Therefore:

> Upon all these considerations it was agreed, that those of each class should meet together. And by this means, a more full inquiry was made into the behaviour of each person. . . . Advice or reproof was given as need required, quarrels made up, misunderstandings removed: and after an hour or two spent in this labour of love, they concluded with prayer and thanksgiving.[79]
>
> It can scarce be conceived what advantages have been reaped from this little prudential regulation. Many now

> happily experienced that Christian fellowship of which they *had* not so much as an idea before. They began to "bear one another's burdens," and naturally to "care for each other." As they had daily a more intimate acquaintance with, so they had a more endeared affection for, each other. And "speaking the truth in love, they grew up into Him in all things, who is the Head, even Christ. . . ."[80]

It should be observed that the class meetings were not designed as "Christian growth groups," or as cells for *koinonia* — although in fact they did serve that function. Their primary purpose was discipline. The Band had already been instituted as the primary growth cell of Methodism. As Skevington Wood observes, "The class was the disciplinary unit of the society" and was "the keystone of the entire Methodist edifice," while the Band was the confessional unit. Wood observes,

> These inner groups were continued in the form in which they had been taken over from the Fetter Lane Society, with its predominantly Moravian stamp. . . . This mutual confession to one another, based on the scriptural injunction of James 5:16, was the Methodist equivalent of auricular confession to a priest, and was designed to bring the same sense of relief and catharsis.[81]

All band members met together quarterly for the love feast — another Moravian contribution. A system of band tickets was used, and only band members were to be admitted to the love feasts.[82]

Leaders in the Methodist movement now included the preachers Wesley appointed, assistants, class and band leaders, stewards, visitors of the sick, and schoolmasters. In providing for the care of the sick Wesley observed, "Upon reflection, I saw how exactly, in this also, we had copied after the primitive Church."[83]

Separation from the Moravians

Wesley's heavy involvement in the growing work at Bristol meant that he was frequently away from London. But while in London he was active in the Fetter Lane Society and in looking after the expanding flock of Methodists there.

The two Wesleys and James Hutton seem to have been the

principal figures in the Fetter Lane Society until October, 1739. In that month Philip Henry Molther arrived from the continent. It was conflict between Wesley's and Molther's views which led to Wesley's separation from the Fetter Lane Society in July, 1740.

As early as June, 1739, Wesley at Bristol was receiving reports from London that the Fetter Lane Society was falling apart and needed him. Apparently some of the Moravian Brethren also saw the need for more consistent leadership and applied to Germany for someone to be sent. This move, and the mixed character of the society at this time, are suggested by Holmes:

> At the request of the friends of the Brethren in London, one of their ministers, Philip Henry Molther, was appointed to care for the Society, which had been formed in the metropolis. The persons comprising this Society, were partly those, who had been excited to greater zeal in religion by the labors of the two Wesleys, and partly such as ascribed their spiritual attainments to their acquaintance with the Brethren.[84]

A leadership struggle and a clash of views involving Wesley and Molther, and secondarily, Charles Wesley and James Hutton, began soon after Molther arrived.

Philip Molther (1713-1780) was, like Böhler, a young Lutheran student at the University of Jena who had become an ordained minister of the Moravians.[85] He taught a doctrine of "stillness" that ran directly counter to Wesley's emphasis on the means of grace. He began telling the people at Fetter Lane that they did not truly have saving faith if they still had any doubt or fear. Therefore they should abstain from all the ordinances, particularly the Lord's Supper, and "be still" before the Lord, until they received true faith. The ordinances are not really means of grace, he taught, for Christ is the only means. Charles Wesley commented, "He expressly denies that grace, or the Spirit, is transmitted through the means, particularly through the Supper."[86]

Hutton was apparently won over by Molther, and Charles very nearly so. When John arrived back in London November 3, he saw how far Molther's teaching had already been accepted:

> Our Society met at seven in the morning [Sunday,

> November 4], and continued silent till eight. . . . In the evening I met the women of our Society at Fetter Lane, where some of the brethren strongly intimated, that none of them had any true faith; and then asserted in plain terms, 1) 'That till they had true faith they ought to be still, — that is, as they explained themselves, to abstain from the means of grace, as they are called, the Lord's Supper in particular.' 2) 'That the ordinances are not means of grace, there being no other means than Christ.'[87]

August Spangenberg, the Moravian leader whom Wesley had known in Georgia, was then in London, and Wesley went to see him on November 7. He was disturbed to find that Spangenberg seemed to agree with Molther. Wesley left a few days later for Oxford and Bristol, after urging the society members to use the means of grace.[88]

While at Bristol, Wesley received "several unpleasant accounts" of the situation at Fetter Lane. He returned to London on November 19 and on November 30 had an unsatisfactory conference with Molther. In December he received a letter indicating that "brother Hutton, Clark, Edmonds and Bray are determined to go on, according to Mr. Molther's directions, and to raise a Church, as they term it; and I suppose above half our brethren are on their side."[90]

Even as the crisis at Fetter Lane was worsening, Wesley's personal ministry in London was expanding. For some time Wesley had been preaching to large crowds in Moorfields, a popular park and recreation area. Nearby stood the abandoned Royal Foundry, which had stood unused since an explosion and fire some 33 years earlier. At the end of 1739 Wesley leased the building and remodeled it, and opened it as his headquarters early in 1740.[91] By June of 1740 the Methodist Society at the Foundry had 300 members.[92] Wesley was not about to be sidetracked, nor could he agree with Molther that he lacked true faith.

As Knox observes,

> While Molther and Hutton were trying to convince Wesley that the only way to attain true conversion was to wait for it in perfect stillness, he was preaching, at Bristol [as well as London] to people who cried as in the agonies of death, . . . who were released . . . then and there from the power of the devil. For Wesley, the experimentalist, it was enough.[93]

But Wesley did not give up trying to dissuade the Fetter Lane people from Molther's "stillness" doctrine. On January 1, 1740, he tried to explain to the society what "true stillness" really is. He was in Bristol, Oxford, and elsewhere, for most of January, March, and April, but returned on April 22 because of the growing confusion at Fetter Lane. He and Charles spent two hours with Molther on April 25 and met with the society to discuss the question of ordinances. After another prolonged stay in Bristol, he returned again to London in early June. He met with the society several more times, but on the night of July 16, after extensive debate, the majority agreed that Wesley should no longer be allowed to speak to the society.

The final break occurred, ironically, at a Sunday evening love feast four days later, on July 20. Forbidden to preach, Wesley read a short paper stating his points of disagreement with Molther. They he and 18 or 19 of the 60 or so present walked out of the meeting. Lady Huntingdon, apparently, was one of those who left with the Wesleys.[94]

The following Wednesday, Wesley notes, "Our little society met at the Foundery, [sic] instead of Fetter Lane." About 25 persons were present.[95] Wesley henceforth was to work independently of the Moravians. For its part, the Fetter Lane Society gradually evolved from July 1740 to October 1742, from an Anglican society into a Moravian congregation.[96] Molther was recalled to the continent, and in April 1741, Spangenberg was sent to organize and superintend Moravian work in England. In 1742 Spangenberg organized the seventy-some remaining members of the Fetter Lane Society into the first Moravian congregation in London.[97] Among the members were James Hutton, "the first English Moravian," who nevertheless remained on good terms with the Wesleys and published some of their books and hymns.[98]

What were Wesley's reasons for separating from the Fetter Lane Society? Holmes attributes the breach to misunderstandings due to language and cultural differences,[99] but clearly much more was at stake. Molther's views were probably not totally representative of Moravians at large, although Spangenberg seemed to agree with him.

Wesley always spoke highly of the Moravians in general, while criticizing particular points with which he could not agree. The immediate point of disagreement in 1740 was Wesley's insistence on the Anglican understanding of the means of grace. But Wesley had

other objections as well. He wrote his brother Charles in April 1741:

> As yet I dare in nowise join with the Moravians: 1) Because their whole scheme is mystical, not scriptural, — refined in every point above what is written, immeasurably beyond the plain doctrines of the Gospel. 2) Because there is darkness and closeness in all their behaviour, and guile in almost all their words. 3) Because they not only do not practice, but utterly despise and deny, self-denial and the daily cross. 4) Because they, upon principle, conform to the world, in wearing gold or costly apparel. 5) Because they extend Christian liberty, in this and many other respects, beyond what is warranted by the holy writ. 6) Because they are by no means zealous of good works; or, at least, only to their own people. And, lastly, because they make inward religion swallow up outward in general. For these reasons chiefly I will rather, God being my helper, stand quite alone, than join with them: I mean, till I have full assurance that they will spread none of the errors among the little flock committed to my charge.[100]

Concerning the ordinances of God, Moravian practice, said Wesley, is generally better than their principle. He felt the whole church was "tainted with Quietism, Universal Salvation, and Antinomianism" in its doctrine.[101] In regard to Molther, Wesley said, "The great fault of the Moravian Church seems to lie in not openly disclaiming all he had said; which in all probability they would have done, had they not leaned to the same opinion."[102]

Methodist Beginnings at the Foundry

Wesley was now employed full-time in preaching, writing, and organizing the growing Methodist work in London, Bristol, and other places.

The Foundry became his headquarters and was a beehive of activity. In remodeling the old building Wesley built a galleried chapel to hold 1500 people, a large room which would accommodate 300, a dispensary, and a bookroom for the sale of his books and pamphlets. Here Wesley opened a free school for 60 children, an almshouse for widows, and the first free dispensary in London since the dissolution of the monasteries.[103] Wesley put plain benches

instead of pews in the chapel, and noted that "all the benches for rich and poor were of the same construction."[104] He had an apartment on the second floor; "I myself," he said, "as well as the other preachers who are in town, diet with the poor, on the same food and at the same table."[105]

As the Methodist movement grew, as many as 66 class meetings met at the Foundry weekly. Two weekly prayer meetings were held, and Wesley or one of his preachers preached regularly at 5:00 a.m.[106] It was a settlement almost on the Franciscan model," comments Frederick Gill.[107] Or one may think of Augustine with his colleagues and parishioners gathered around him in Hippo.

Wesley's work at the Foundry suggests something of the profound identification he felt with the poor. This was, in fact, one of the points on which he was criticized. An article in the June 1741, *Gentleman's Magazine* describing the meetings at the Foundry complained, "Most of those Persons who frequent them, are the poorest and meanest Sort of People, who have families to provide for, and hardly Bread to put in their Mouths."[108] Maldwyn Edwards suggests that Wesley practically "discovered the poor."[109] "His life was one long crusade in the cause of the poor, and he encouraged others to follow his example."[110]

In studying this aspect in Wesley, Edwards argues that Wesley had, on the one hand, a profound compassion for and interest in the poor, while on the other hand he distrusted the masses as a political force, convinced that government by the aristocracy was best.

> Wesley once coming out from his Oxford seclusion gave himself unweariedly in the service of the poor. He grew to appreciate the conditions under which they had to live and the brave struggle they made. Set up against such a background the idle follies of the rich became reprehensible sins.[111]

Wesley himself wrote,

> I have found some of the uneducated poor, who have the most exquisite taste and sentiment, and many, very many of the rich who have scarcely any at all. In most genteel religious persons there is such a mixture that I scarcely ever have confidence in them; but I love the poor, and in many of

> them find pure genuine grace unmixed with folly and affection. . . . If I might choose, I should still preach the gospel to the poor.[112]

This outline of the events in Wesley's life and ministry from his return to England in 1738, to his separation from the Moravians in 1740 shows that Wesley both benefited from and reacted against Moravian teaching and practice. The two great Moravian contributions to Wesley were in clarifying for him and leading him into the experience of saving faith, and in providing him models of Christian life in community. Whether he actually saw the Moravian Brethren as a model for renewal within the larger established church, as an *ecclesioloa in ecclesia,* is debatable, for Wesley knew that the Moravians had, in fact, become a separate church, despite Zinzendorf's vision. In any case, the Moravian contribution to Wesley was considerable. True, there were the problems with Molther (which, however, may have actually helped Wesley clarify his understanding of the Sacraments). But without Peter Böhler, Wesley might never have been anything more than a very zealous sacramentarian, seeking personal holiness in a relentless life of good works.

Footnotes

[1]Letter from Dublin, June 20, 1789. *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley, A. M.* ed. John Telford (London: The Epworth Press, 1931), VIII, p. 145.

[2]R. A. Knox, Enthusiasm: *A Chapter in the History of Religion,* (London: Oxford University Press, 1950), p. 423.

[3]Robert F. Wearmouth, *Methodism and the Common People of the Eighteenth Century,* (London: Epworth Press, 1945), p. 175; John S. Simon, *John Wesley: The Last Phase,* (London: Epworth Press, 1934), p. 319. According to Bernard Semmel, the population of England and Wales grew from an estimated 5,826,000 in 1700 to about 9,156,000 at the end of the century. Bernard Semmel, *The Methodist Revolution,* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), p. 9.

[4]C. E. Vulliamy, *John Wesley* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1932), p. vii.

[5]Alan R. Tippett, "The Church Which Is His Body," *Missiology,* 2:2 (April, 1974), p. 147.

[5a]Arthur Skevington Wood, "The Contribution of John Wesley to the Theology of Grace" in Clark Pinnock, ed., *Grace Unlimited,* (Minneapolis: Bethany, 1975), p. 209.

[5b]George H. Williams, *The Radical Reformation,* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1962), p. xxxi.

[6]Frank Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England,* Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1970), p. 299.

[7]Ernest F. Stoeffler, "Tradition and Renewal in the Ecclesiology of John Wesley,"

in Bernd Jaspert and Rudolf Mohr, eds., *Traditio — Krisis — Renovatio aus theologischer Sicht* (Marburg: N. G. Elwert, 1976), p. 299.

[8]*Ibid.*, p. 300.

[9]Ernest A. Payne, *The Free Church Tradition in the Life of England,* 3rd ed. rev. (London: SCM Press, 1951), p. 93. Cf. Donald F. Durnbaugh, *The Believers' Church: The History and Character of Radical Protestantism,* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1968).

[10]I have preferred to use Believers' Church to Free Church in this study as more accurately describing the essential characteristics of the "Radical Protestant" tradition and to avoid placing emphasis on the establishment-versus-disestablishment question.

[11]An Anglican rector and convert to Anglicanism from a Dissenting family.

[12]Stoeffler, p. 302.

[13]Vulliamy, p. 23.

[14]*Ibid.*, p. 30. The influence of Law should not be over-emphasized, however, for Wesley was simultaneously reading many other books. Also, Wesley from the beginning had a decidedly practical bent which kept him from extreme mysticism. For Wesley's correspondence with Law during the critical month of May, 1738, see Wesley's *Works* (Zondervan edition), XII, pp. 51-53; Telford, *The Life of John Wesley* (New York: Phillips and Hunt, 1899), pp. 103-06.

[15]Vulliamy, p. 53.

[16]*Ibid.*, p. 60. Later Wesley said he was too concerned at this period about his own soul.

[17]Vulliamy, pp. 53-54.

[18]*Ibid.*, p. 55.

[19]*Ibid.*, pp. 48-49.

[20]*Ibid.*, p. 54.

[21]*Journal* (1909 ed.), I, p. 142.

[22]Baker, p. 52.

[23]*Ibid.*, p. 51.

[24]*Ibid.*, p. 44.

[25]*Ibid.*, pp. 51-52. The organization of religious societies owed nothing to the Moravians, but the bands certainly did.

[26]John Holmes, *History of the Protestant Church of the United Brethren,* (London: J. Nisbet, 1825), I, pp. 308-09.

[27]*Ibid.*, p. 309.

[28]*Ibid.*

[29]A. J. Lewis, *Zinzendorf the Ecumenical Pioneer* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), p. 125.

[30]*Journal* (1827 ed.), I, p. 80.

[31]Holmes, I, p. 311; William G. Addison, *The Renewed Church of the United Brethren 1722-1930* (London: Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, 1932), p. 62; Nolan B. Harmon, ed., *The Encyclopedia of World Methodism* (Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 1974), I, p. 291; J. D. Douglas, ed., *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1974), pp. 138-39. Halevy notes that Böhler "had been ordained a priest by Zinzendorf the previous year, and since the Church of England had formally recognized the validity of the Moravian episcopacy, John and Charles Wesley did not have the scruples" about him they would otherwise have had. Elie

Halevy, *The Birth of Methodism in England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), p. 55.

[32]Telford, *The Life of John Wesley,* pp. 95-96.

[33]*Journal* (1827 ed.), I, p. 82.

[34]Baker, pp. 52-53. Wesley had earlier experimented some with extempore prayer, particularly in services on shipboard, and had witnessed the practice among other groups.

[35]Addison, p. 62.

[36]*Journal* (1827 ed.), I, p. 87

[37]Stoeffler, p. 304; A. Skevington Wood, *The Burning Heart: John Wesley, Evangelist* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), p. 66.

[38]Wood, p. 67, quoting Dorothy Marshall.

[39]Harmon, I, p. 1185; Vulliamy, p. 85; Addison, p. 83.

[40]Addison, p. 83.

[41]Addison gives a good summary of the society system in England, pp. 79-81. See also Halevy, pp. 41ff, who traces the origin of the society movement in general and of the religious societies in particular. Halevy notes the sacramental zeal of the religious societies and their dedication to good works, especially visitation of the poor, sick and prisoners. The Holy Club at Oxford was based on this model. As to the role such societies played in Wesley's and Whitefield's ministry after 1738, Halevy notes that the two evangelists "found these societies numerous and flouirishing; they succeeded so well in penetrating them with their influence that it is often difficult to say whether, during the three years which preceded their break with the established church, when the Methodists speak of a society, they mean a new association that they formed to spread their doctrine or one of the earlier Religious Societies that was now open, by the will of its members, to their new preaching" (Halevy, pp. 42-43).

[42]John C. Bowmer, *The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper in Early Methodism* (London: Dacre Press, 1951), p. 38.

[43]Lewis, p. 125; Knox, p. 470.

[44]Wesley notes, "The return of my brother's illness obliged me again to hasten to London. In the evening [of May 1] I found him at James Hutton's. . ." (*Journal* [1827 ed.], I, p. 87). Cf. Vulliamy, p. 84.

[45]*Journal* (1827 ed.), I, p. 87.

[46]Richard Watson, *The Life of Rev. John Wesley, A.M.* (New York: Carlton and Phillips, 1853), p. 52.

[47]Addison, p. 62.

[48]*Journal* (1827 ed.), I, pp. 87-88. Vulliamy says, "Here is the germ of Methodist organization, and it cannot be doubted that the rules were drawn up by Wesley himself" (p. 85).

[49]Addison, p. 62.

[50]*Ibid.,* p. 82.

[51]*Journal* (1827 ed.), I, p. 100.

[52]Stoeffler, p. 305.

[53]*Ibid.,* p. 306.

[54]*Journal* (1827 ed.), I, p. 152.

[55]*Works.* (Zondervan ed.), XII, p. 55.

[56]Albert C. Outler, ed., *John Wesley* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 353.

[57]Frank Baker, "The People Called Methodists. 3. Polity," in Rupert Davies and Gordon Rupp, eds., *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain* (London: Epworth Press, 1965), I, p. 220.

[58]*Journal* (1827 ed.), I, pp. 163-64.

[59]*Ibid.*, p. 169.

[60]Vulliamy, p. 90.

[61]Harmon, I, p. 329.

[62]Harris and Griffith Jones, an Anglican "missionary" to Wales, had already begun open-air preaching before 1738. Halevy notes that Whitefield met Jones and Harris soon after his return from America. Whitefield wrote of Harris, "When I first saw him, my Heart was Knit closely to him. I wanted to catch some of his Fire, and gave him the right Hand of Fellowship with my whole heart." Halevy adds, "It was then that Whitefield began open-air preaching near Bristol among the miners of Kingswood, in the manner of the Welsh preachers." Halevy, p. 60.

[63]Halevy, p. 69. See also Bernard Semmel's significant recent study, *The Methodist Revolution* (Note 3, above), which follows Halevy and attempts to test the validity of Halevy's thesis concerning the social-political influence of the Wesleyan Revival.

[64]Semmel, p. 13.

[65]*The Gentleman's Magazine,* IX (May, 1739), p. 257.

[66]"Of the pernicious Nature and Tendency of Methodism," *The Gentleman's Magazine,* IX (May, 1739), p. 257.

[67]*Journal* (1827 ed.), I, p. 177.

[68]*Ibid.*

[69]*Ibid.*, pp. 177-78.

[70]Payne, pp. 92-93; Vulliamy, p. 94.

[71]*Works* (Zondervan ed.), VIII, pp. 248-68.

[72]*Ibid.*, p. 250.

[73]*Ibid.*

[74]Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England,* p. 141.

[75]*Works* (Zondervan ed.), VIII, p. 258.

[76]"Rules of the Band-Societies," *Works* (Zondervan ed.), VIII, pp. 272-73. Additional directions were given six years later; *ibid.*, pp. 273-74.

[77]*Ibid.*, p. 151; Watson, p. 96; *Works* (Zondervan ed.), VIII, pp. 252-53.

[78]*Works* (Zondervan ed.), p. 253.

[79]*Ibid.*, pp. 253-54.

[80]*Ibid.*, p. 254.

[81]Wood, pp. 191, 192.

[82]"Minutes of Several Conversations . . . ," *Works* (Zondervan ed.), p. 307.

[83]*Works* (Zondervan ed.), pp. 261-63.

[84]Holmes, I, pp. 311-12.

[85]Holmes, I, p. 311; Harmon, II, p. 1654.

[86]Bowmer, p. 40.

[87]*Journal* (1827 ed.), I, p. 237.

[88]*Ibid.*, pp. 237, 245.

[89]*Ibid.*, p. 245.

[90]*Ibid.*

[91]Vulliamy, p. 102; Harmon, II, pp. 1444-45; L. Tyerman, *The Life and Times of the Rev. John Wesley, M. A., Founder of the Methodists* (New York: Harper and

Brothers, 1872), I, pp. 214, 271-73.

[92]Baker, "The People Called Methodists . . . ," p. 220.

[93]Knox, p. 472.

[94]Addison, p. 84; Vulliamy, p. 140; Bowmer, p. 40; Holmes, I, p. 314; and Wesley's *Journal* (1827 ed.), I, p. 271.

[95]*Journal* (1827 ed.), I, p. 271. Moede (following Tyerman) says 75 were present — 18 from Fetter Lane and 57 others. Gerald F. Moede, *The Office of Bishop in Methodism: Its History and Development* (Zurich: Publishing House of the Methodist Church, 1964), p. 15.

[96]Addison, pp. 86-91.

[97]Knox, p. 474; Holmes, I, p. 315; Harmon, II, p. 2222; Lewis, pp. 127-28.

[98]Harmon, I, p. 1185.

[99]Holmes, I, pp. 312-13.

[100]*Works* (Zondervan ed.), XII, p. 109. Wesley seems to be describing here principally the London Moravians. Does this passage suggest a marked socio-economic difference between these Moravians and Wesley's flock at the Foundry?

[101]*Works* (Zondervan ed.), VIII, pp. 378, 422.

[102]*Ibid.*, p. 412.

[103]Harmon, II, p. 1444.

[104]Tyerman, I, p. 272.

[105]Frederick C. Gill, *In the Steps of John Wesley* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1962), p. 43.

[106]*Ibid.*

[107]*Ibid.*, Cf. *Works* (Oxford ed.), XI, pp. 1, 84-85.

[108]"Doctrines and Divisions of the Methodists," *The Gentleman's Magazine, XI (June, 1741), p. 320.*

[109]Maldwyn Edwards, *John Wesley and the Eighteenth Century: A Study of His Social and Political Influence,* rev. ed. (London: The Epworth Press, 1955), p. 148.

[110]*Ibid.*

[111]*Ibid.*, p. 49; cf. pp. 50-53.

[112]*Ibid.*, p. 50.

Wesley's Concept of the Church

by Howard A. Snyder

We turn now from a historical to a largely systematic treatment of Wesley and his understanding of the Church. We have noted the events which modeled his thinking; now we turn to the content of his views.

Sources of Wesley's Views

The major sources of Wesley's ecclesiology were the Catholic tradition mediated through the Anglicanism and the Believers' Church tradition mediated through the Moravian Brethren. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say his views on the Church were essentially those of seventeenth-century Anglicanism, but interpreted in such a way as to conform to the Believers' Church understanding of the Christian community.

The beginnings of Wesley's conscious consideration of ecclesiological questions can be traced to the years of 1725-28, when Wesley began his quest in earnest for inward holiness. His reading for ordination would have introduced him to three important themes: the life of holiness, the importance of the sacraments, and the authority of the tradition of the primitive church. He accepted these views wholeheartedly, all of which were matters of ecclesiology as much as of soteriology.

Baker notes that Wesley "firmly accepted the *via media* of the Church of England as incorporated in Cranmer's *Book of Common Prayer,* and expounded in turn by Jewel as the fulfillment of Scripture and the Fathers and by Hooker as the crown of human reasoning."[113] The Church of England — which Wesley considered, over-all, the best church in Christendom — was the middle way between Catholicism and Protestantism. John Jewell (1522-1571) and Richard Hooker (ca. 1553-1600) had defended the Church of England against Rome and extreme Puritanism, respectively, arguing that the Anglican Church was most compatible with Scripture and reason.[114]

Outler summarizes the principal points in Jewel's ecclesiology, as presented in his *Apologia pro ecclesia Anglicana* (1562) under five heads: "(1) The church's subordination to Scripture; (2) The church's unity in Christ and the essentials of doctrine; (3) The notion that paridigmata for ecclesiology should be drawn from the patristic age; (4) The apostolic doctrine; (5) The idea of a *functional* episcopacy (as belonging to the church's well-being rather than its essence)."[115] These are all elements which Wesley was to hold to all his life.

Development of Wesley's Views

Wesley gave some attention to ecclesiology during his stay in Georgia. With his strong practical reforming bent, he was especially interested in questions of church order. Confronting a missionary situation brought these questions to the fore in a new way.

Wesley's father had urged him to read the sermons of Bishop William Beveridge (1637-1708) as being "perhaps as like those of the apostolical ages as any between them and us."[116] Beveridge, like Jeremy Taylor, was one of the "non-jurors" who refused to take the oath to William and Mary in 1689, and emphasized a life of deep devotion and sacramental piety.[117] While in Georgia, Wesley read Beveridge's *Synodikon: sive Pandectae Canonum Apostolorum et Conciliorum ab Ecclesia Graeca Receptorum,* which included the *Apostolic Canons.* This reading, according to Baker, convinced Wesley of two things: "First, that he had allotted Church tradition a higher place than it merited in relation to the Bible," since some council decisions went beyond Scripture; and "Secondly, that the foundation upon which he had laid so much of his own ecclesiastical structure was unreliable." Wesley had put great store in the so-called *Apostolic Canons,* but Beveridge convinced him that these were neither as ancient nor authentic as he had assumed.[118]

Wesley studied the question of chuch order throughout his stay in Georgia. He considered the question of episcopacy, the validity of Moravian orders, and "lay baptism" (i.e., baptism by unordained ministers).[119]

Back in England, Wesley continued to move in the direction of a more functional view of church order — without, however, departing from Anglican views, which ranged over a broad spectrum. Baker notes, "Already by 1746 Wesley saw the essence of the church and its ministry as functional rather than institutional."[120] Similarly, Robert Monk observes: "Wesley was willing rather early in his evangelical

career to recognize the validity of various forms of church order. This recognition was not, however, foreign to Anglican divines either in Wesley's own time or during the preceding two centuries."[121]

Though Wesley was unsympathetic toward the views of the so-called "Latitudinarians" on most points, it was two Latitudinarian writers who led Wesley to a more functional view of the Church. In 1746 Wesley read Lord Peter King's *Account of the Primitive Church*[122] and, about the same time, Edward Stillingfleet's *Irenicon.*[123] According to Baker, "What these books in fact did was to continue the slow transformation in his thought about the church which had already been taking place in response to other reading, and more especially to the demands of his personal faith and his vocation as evangelist and pastor."[124] Wesley himself wrote,

> I still believe 'the espiscopal form of church government to be both scriptural and apostolical': I mean, well agreeing with the practice and writings of the apostles. But that it is *prescribed* in Scripture I do not believe. This opinion, which I once heartily espoused, I have been heartily ashamed of ever since I read Bishop Stillingfleet's *Irenicon.*[125]

These developments were during the crucial first decade or so of Wesley's public ministry following Aldersgate and the beginning of field preaching. Wesley was already appointing many lay preachers, and the views of King and Stillingfleet confirmed him in the legitimacy of this move. They were to prove important later in the question of Wesley's right or authority to ordain ministers for America. By 1750, says Baker, Wesley was clear as to the basis of authority in determining his views:

> . . . the Anglican triad of Scripture, reason, and antiquity, strongly reinforced by an intuitive individualistic approach deriving in part both from Pietist and mystical influence. The appeal to reason however, had developed into an urgent pragmatism.[126]

Wesley's own actions and writings confirm the truth of Baker's claim that Wesley's ecclesiology combined two very different visions of the Church.

Says Baker,

> Throughout his adult life Wesley responded with varying degrees of enthusiasm to two fundamentally different views of the church. One was that of an historical institution, organically linked to the apostolic church by a succession of bishops and inherited customs, served by a priestly caste who duly expounded the Bible and administered the sacraments in such a way as to preserve the ancient traditions on behalf of all who were made members by baptism. According to the other view the church was a fellowship of believers who shared both the apostolic experience of God's living presence and also a desire to bring others into this same personal experience by whatever methods of worship and evangelism seemed most promising to those among them whom the Holy Spirit had endowed with special gifts of prophecy and leadership. The first view saw the church in essence as an ancient institution to be preserved, the second as a faithful few with a mission to the world: the first was a traditional rule, the second a living relationship.[127]

Toward the end of his life, when Wesley had already ordained ministers for American Methodism, he published his sermons "Of the Church" and "On Schism." These show that Wesley still held essentially the same view of the Church that he had come to by 1750. To those who thought Wesley's actions were inconsistent with his profession of loyalty to the Church of England he responded,

> . . . they cannot but think so, unless they observe my two principles: The one, that I dare not separate from the Church, that I believe it would be a sin so to do; the other, that I believe it would be a sin not to vary from it in the points above mentioned. I say, put these two principles together, First, I will not separate from the Church; yet, Secondly, in cases of necessity I will vary from it, (both of which I have constantly and openly avowed for upwards of 50 years,) and inconsistency vanishes away. I have been true to my profession from 1730 to this day.[128]

We are entirely consistent, said Wesley. "We act at all times on one plain uniform principle — we will obey the rulers and governors of the Church, whenever we can consistently with our duty to God,

whenever we cannot, we will quietly obey God rather than men."[129]

Wesley could still say at the end of his life, "I am fully convinced that our own Church [of England], with all her blemishes, is nearer the scriptural plan than any other in Europe."[130]

Basic Definition of "Church"

Wesley began his *Explanatory Notes on the New Testament* in 1743 and completed them in 1754. It is here that Wesley gives some of his most succinct statements on the essence of the Church.

The Church is "the believers in Christ," "the whole body of Christian believers," "the whole body of true believers, whether on earth or in paradise."[131] Perhaps Wesley's comment on Acts 5:11 is his most comprehensive brief definition of the New Testament church: "A company of men, called by the gospel, grafted into Christ by baptism, animated by love, united by all kind of fellowship, and disciplined by the death of Ananias and Sapphira."[132]

In his sermon "Of the Church" Wesley said the Church is, in the proper sense, "a congregation, or body of people, united together in the service of God."[133] Even two or three united in Christ's name, or a Christian family, may therefore be called a church.[134] The primary meaning is visible, gathered local congregation. But in a broader sense "Church" means "the catholic or universal church; that is, all the Christians under heaven," understood as made up of all the local congregations in the world.[135] In "A Letter to a Roman Catholic" in 1749 Wesley said,

> I believe that Christ by his Apostles gathered unto himself a Church, to which he has continually added such as shall be saved; that this catholic, that is, universal, Church, extending to all nations and all ages, is holy in all its members, who have fellowship with the holy angels, who constantly minister to these heirs of salvation; and with all the living members of Christ on earth, as well as all who are departed in his faith and fear.[136]

Wesley felt he could reconcile the New Testament understanding of the Church with Article 19 of the Anglican Thirty-Nine Articles. He wrote,

> A visible Church (as our Article defines it) is 'a company of

> faithful (or believing) people: *coetus credentium,'* This is the essence of a Church, and the properties thereof are (as they are described in the words that follow), 'that the pure word of God be preached therein, and the sacraments duly administered.' Now, then, according to this authentic account, what is the Church of England? What is it, indeed, but the *faithful people,* the *true believers* of England? It is true, if these are scattered abroad they come under another consideration. But when they are visibly joined by assembling together to hear 'the pure word of God preached' and to 'eat of one bread' and 'drink of one cup,' they are then properly 'the visible Church of England.'[137]

Wesley translated "faithful men" in the Article as "congregation of believers" on the basis of the Latin *coetus credentium;* actually the Latin version had *coetus fidelium.*[138] Wesley said he did not propose to defend this definition of the Church, but he thought it was compatible with Scripture.

The words in the Article, "in which the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments be duly administered" Wesley interpreted more functionally than formally. They meant that any congregation where the Gospel was not truly preached or the sacraments not duly administered was neither a part of the Church of England nor the universal church.[139] Yet Wesley was charitable towards improper practices and even wrong doctrines if a congregation gave evidence of the Spirit's genuine presence:

> Whoever they are that have 'one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one God and Father of all,' I can easily bear with their holding wrong opinions, yea, and superstitious modes of worship; nor would I, on these accounts, scruple still to include them within the pale of the catholic church; neither would I have any objection to receive them, if they desired it, as members of the Church of England.[140]

His sermon "Catholic Spirit" suggests how far Wesley was willing to go in recognizing different groups as genuinely belonging to the universal church:

> We must both act as each is fully persuaded in his own mind.

> Hold you fast that which you believe is most acceptable to God, and I will do the same. I believe the Episcopal form of Church government to be scriptural and apostolical. If you think the Presbyterian or Independent is better, think so still, and act accordingly. I believe infants ought to be baptized; and that this may be done either by dipping or sprinkling. If you are otherwise persuaded, be so still, and follow your own persuasion. It appears to me, that forms of prayer are of excellent use, particularly in the great congregation. . . . My sentiment is that I ought not to forbid water, wherein persons may be baptized; and that I ought to eat bread and drink wine, as a memorial of my dying Master: however, if you are not convinced of this, act according to the light you have. I have no desire to dispute with you one moment upon any of the preceding heads.[141]

But applying Wesley's definition of the Church as a congregation of faithful believers suggests some ambivalence and ambiguity, if not actual inconsistency, in Wesley. On the one hand the Church of England was, essentially, the "faithful people" or "true believers" visibly assembled together in Word and sacrament. But on the other hand Wesley virtually accused the Church of England of being apostate. There are only a few in England "whose inmost soul is renewed after the image of God," he wrote in 1763, "and as for a Christian *visible* church, or a body of Christians visibly united together, where is this to be seen?"[142]

Wesley considered the Church of England (and the whole Christian Church generally) to be largely in a fallen state. In some formal sense the Church of England with its structures and liturgy was still part of the Church, but in fact and spirit the true Church was but a remnant of faithful believers scattered throughout the Anglican and other communions.

Wesley seems to have seen the Methodist societies as comprising, to a large degree, the true visible Church within Anglicanism. Yet as Methodism grew he recognized that not even all Methodists were "true believers" or "faithful men," and that as time went on this would increasingly be so.

Outler summarizes Wesley as follows:

1) The *unity* of the church is based upon the Christian

koinonia in the Holy Spirit.

2) The *holiness* of the church is grounded in the discipline of grace which guides and matures the Christian life from its threshold in justifying faith to its plerophory in sanctification.

3) The *catholicity* of the church is defined by the universal outreach of redemption, the essential community of all true believers.

4) The *apostolicity* of the church is gauged by the succession of apostolic doctrine in those who have been faithful to the apostolic witness.[143]

This seems to be an apt description. The Church is *one* because it is "in all ages and nations . . . the one body of Christ," endued with faith working by love.[144] Its *holiness* consists in the holiness of its members, "because every member thereof is holy, though in different degrees, as He that called them is holy."[145] It is *catholic* because it is the people of God "dispersed over the whole earth, in Europe, Asia, Africa, and America."[146] And it is *apostolic,* for there has been an interrupted apostolic witness to the Gospel through a faithful community and faithful ministers down through history.[147]

The Church in History

Wesley's reading concerning the early church had not only brought him to a more functional view of church order; it had also changed his thinking about church history. His concept of the Church must be understood in the context of his understanding of the Church in history.

Wesley's reading in Georgia altered the direction of his strong primitivism. Beveridge's *Synodikon* undermined his faith in the apostolic origin and universal practice of many church traditions. He now saw that antiquity should be no more than a "subordinate rule with scripture," rather than a coordinate rule, and that the period of the Church's early faithfulness could not be extended, as he had before thought, into the fourth century.[148] For Anglicans, the "early church" meant the Church of the first three or four centuries, while "primitive church" distinguished the Church of the New Testament

period. It was the primitive church that Wesley increasingly focused upon, especially after Aldersgate — and less for its form of order than for its spirit and corporate experience.[149]

Wesley came to agree with the German historian Gottfried Arnold (1666-1714) that the Church had early fallen into unfaithfulness. According to Durnbaugh, Wesley took a copy of Arnold's *True Portrayal of the First Christians* (1696) with him to Georgia and had read William Cave, one of Arnold's principal sources.[150] It is uncertain how much or how directly Arnold may have influenced Wesley, but the link with Arnold is of some significance since Arnold's writings were influential among eighteenth century Mennonites and Brethren.[151] Littell notes that Arnold accepted "a very large share of the primitivist interpretation of Christian history which the Anabaptists had defended in the previous century."[152]

Wesley was later to speak in strong terms of the unfaithfulness of the Church throughout history. In his sermon "The Mystery of Iniquity" he said:

> Persecution never did, never could, give any lasting wound to genuine Christianity. But the greatest it ever received, the grand blow which was struck at the very root of that humble, gentle, patient love, which is the fulfilling of the Christian law, the whole essence of true religion, was struck in the fourth century by Constantine the Great, when he called himself a Christian, and poured in a flood of riches, honours, and power, upon the Christians; more especially upon the Clergy. . . . Just so, when the fear of persecution was removed, and wealth and honour attended the Christian profession, the Christians 'did not gradually sink, but rushed headlong into all manner of vices.' Then 'the mystery of iniquity' was no more hid, but stalked abroad in the face of the sun. Then, not the golden age but the iron age of the church commenced. . . .
>
> And this is the event which most Christian expositors mention with such triumph! yea, which some of them suppose to be typified in the Revelation, by 'the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven!' Rather say, it was the coming of Satan and all his legions from the bottomless pit: seeing from that very time he hath set up his throne over

> the face of the whole earth, and reigned over the Christian as well as the Pagan world with hardly any control! . . . Such has been the deplorable state of the Christian church, from the time of Constantine till the Reformation. A Christian nation, a Christian city (according to the scriptural model,) was nowhere to be seen; but every city and country, a few individuals excepted, was plunged in all manner of wickedness.[153]

And Wesley went on to say that the same fallen condition, in large measure, had continued right up to his day.

This perspective on church history caused Wesley to look sympathetically on second-century Montanism and to see that movement as somewhat parallel to Methodism. In the same sermon on the "Mystery of Iniquity" he said, "As to the heresies fathered upon Montanus, it is not easy to find what they were. I believe his grand heresy was, the maintaining that 'without' inward and outward 'holiness no man shall see the Lord.'"[154] In a brief piece on "The Real Character of Montanus" Wesley argued that, far from being a heretic, Montanus was "one of the best men then upon earth" who, "under the character of a Prophet, as an order established in the Church, appeared (without bringing any new doctrine) for reviving what was decayed, and reforming what might be amiss."[155]

Wesley believed the Church of England as he knew it was as fallen as Christendom generally. In "A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion" (1745), Wesley detailed the fallen state of the Church and the nation of England.[156]

Given such views, it was to be expected that Wesley would give a different interpretation to "Apostolic Succession" than that commonly accepted in Anglicanism. By 1747 Wesley came to believe that Anglican bishops were not in unbroken succession from the Apostles.[157] He wrote in 1761, "I deny that the Romish Bishops came down by *uninterrupted* succession from the Apostles. I never could see it proved; and, I am persuaded I never shall."[158] True apostolic succession came to mean, therefore, the continuity of the apostolic witness and spirit in the Christian community.[159]

Wesley's view of the fallenness of the Church might seem to suggest a rather pessimistic outlook toward the Church's present work and its future in the world, such as found, for example, in modern premillennialism. But Wesley's confidence in the present

working of grace gave him a dynamic and positive conviction concerning what God could accomplish through His people in the present order.

Wesley wrote in 1747, "I desire to have both heaven and hell ever in my eye, while I stand on this isthmus of life, between these two boundless oceans; and I verily think the daily consideration of both highly becomes all men of reason and religion."[160]

Wesley lived the present in the light of the future. For him, that meant working for the establishment of the Kingdom of God here and now, as well as preparing for eternity.

The Possibilities of Grace

Wesley saw no necessary bounds to the free grace of God, and was therefore fundamentally optimistic about the possibilities of God's grace working *now,* in the present, both in individuals and in society. He saw the whole work of salvation, and even creation, as an expression of God's grace. No person is so totally depraved, Wesley taught, as to be outside the grace of God. He wrote, "There is no man that is in a state of mere nature; there is no man, unless he has quenched the Spirit, that is wholly void of the grace of God."[161]

Wesley's emphasis on holiness must be seen in this light. Wesley did not teach "sinless perfection," but he did teach that love could, and must, become the primary motivating force in the Christian's life. He repeatedly defined holiness as loving God with all one's being and loving one's neighbor as oneself. This meant two things for Wesley: (1) God's grace was sufficient to perfect the Christian in love, and (2) this love empowered and impelled the believer to good works. We must give ourselves to God in faith and "in holy, active, patient love."[162]

Wesley's emphasis on grace and on final judgment provided him with a dynamic, rather than static, view of redemption. Salvation included sanctification, which included good works, "faith working by love." By God's grace, men and women were co-laborers with God in the present work of redemption. Wesley saw the present order as an active, ongoing battle between the kingdom of darkness and the Kingdom of God. Christians were not saved *out of* this battle, but were rather *called into it* to wrestle with principalities and powers. The Christian life is lived in the light of eternity — actively, not passively.

This perspective enabled Wesley, in thought and practice, to hold

together three seeming antitheses which so often come unglued in the Church. Since Wesley was more of a Gospel practitioner than a systematic theologian, his balance at these three points is visible as much in his practice as in his doctrine.

The hundreds of little Methodist societies which Wesley formed might almost be called "eschatological communities." Only one condition was required to join them: a desire "to flee from the wrath to come, to be saved from their sins." There was no doctrinal test, for Wesley was convinced that "a man may be orthodox in every point . . . and yet it is possible he may have no religion at all" (Sermon, "The Way to Kingdom").[163] Yet one could continue as a Methodist only if he or she submitted to Methodist disciplines and lived a life of faith and good works. The Church, said Wesley, is a

> . . . body of men compacted together, in order, first, to save each his own soul; then to assist each other in working out their salvation; and afterwards, as far as in them lies, to save all men from present and future misery, to overturn the kingdom of Satan, and set up the kingdom of Christ. And this ought to be the continued care and endeavor of every member thereof; otherwise he is not worthy to be called a member thereof, as he is not a living member of Christ (Sermon, "The Reformation of Manners").[164]

1) Wesley held together the eschatological hope and "the wrath to come." Often the Church divides at this point, some Christians falling into a naive optimism while others preach hell and damnation. Wesley saw both emphases in Scripture, and both were part of his preaching. As A. Skevington Wood points out in *The Burning Heart,* judgment and "the terrors of the Lord" formed a frequent theme in Wesley's preaching. Wesley saw the preaching of judgment "as part of the awakening ministry which paves the way for the gospel offer."[165] He was optimistic about the possibilities of grace and emphatic that God would create a new heaven and a new earth. But this emphasis had to be combined with the warning of judgment and eternal punishment. Biblical realism required holding together eschatological hope and dread. Wood adds, "for Wesley the whole of life was visualized from the standpoint of the eternal. . . . His evangelistic mission was carried on in the knowledge. . . . that both he and his hearers were living between the advents."[166]

2) Partly because of this, Wesley also held together the evangelistic and the prophetic dimensions of the Gospel. There was no split between personal salvation and social engagement.

Wesley was first of all an evangelist, because he felt that all must hear and respond to the convicting and converting Word of God. But the new birth must produce faith, hope, and love, or else it is not true conversion. The "necessary fruit" of the love of God resulting from the new birth, said Wesley, is "the love of our neighbour; of every soul which God hath made." But this love is much more than a passive emotion; it involves . . .

> universal obedience to Him we love, and conformity to His will. . . . And one of the tempers most obviously implied herein is, the being 'zealous of good works'; the hungering and thirsting to do good, in every possible kind, unto all men; the rejoicing to 'spend and be spent for them,' for every child of man; not looking for any recompense in this world, but only in the resurrection of the just.[167]

Nowhere is this combination of the evangelistic and prophetic clearer than in Wesley's preaching of the Gospel to the poor. Wesley noted that "preaching the Gospel to the poor" was a key proof of Jesus' messiahship and was "the greatest mercy, and the greatest miracle of all." Jesus preached to those who were poor both "literally and spiritually."[168]

Migration to the cities had produced a new class of urban poor in Wesley's day. The Industrial Revolution was in full swing, fed by coal. When Wesley preached to the Kingswood colliers, he was touching those most cruelly victimized by industrialization. Yet his response among the coal miners was phenomenal, and Wesley worked tirelessly for their spiritual and material welfare. Among other things, he opened free dispensaries; set up a kind of credit union; established schools and orphanages. His ministry branched out to include lead miners, iron smelters, brass and copper workers, quarrymen, shipyard workers, farm laborers, prisoners, and women industrial workers.

To all these people — the victims of society — Wesley offered the Good News of Jesus Christ. But he did more. He formed them into closeknit fellowships where they could be shepherded and where leaders could be developed, and he worked to reform the conditions

under which they lived. His efforts went beyond welfare to include creative economic alternatives. Through his pointed and prolific writings he agitated for major reforms. He was convinced that "the making an open stand against all the ungodliness and righteousness which overspread our land as a flood, is one of the noblest ways of confessing Christ in the face of His enemies."[169]

3) Finally, Wesley held in creative tension the present and future dimensions of salvation. The new birth began a process that reached into eternity. He reasoned that if God could make men and women holy in heaven, he could also make them holy on earth. His action for social welfare and reform ran parallel to this: God's grace is sufficient, and the power of love in believers is potent enough, to bring substantial improvement in social and economic conditions in the present age.

Wesley was not much concerned about eschatological road-mapping, and to the extent that he dealt with end-time events he largely took over the views of others. As Wood points out, Wesley "confined himself to the bold outline of prophecy, rather than wrestling with the details of debatable interpretation."[170] His view of Christ's second coming was post-millenial, but he did not emphasize the point. His primary focus was much more on the present operation of God's grace and love in believers in the light of the certainty of final judgment and of the "new heavens and new earth."

Wesley's concern for personal holiness has sometimes been distorted over the course of 200 years, and its ethical and social dimensions have often been eclipsed. He was convinced that the social implications of holy living were inescapable. Thus he opposed mysticism and "solitary religion," arguing that " 'Holy Solitaries' is a phrase no more consistent with the Gospel than holy adulterers. The Gospel of Christ knows no religon, but social; no holiness, but social holiness. Faith working by love is the length and breadth and height of Christian perfection."[171]

Church Order, Ministry, and Sacraments

Wesley's view of the Church and its history naturally had implications for the way he would understand questions of church order, ministry, ordination, and the sacraments.

The question of orders of ministry arose very early, for Wesley soon appointed others to assist Charles and himself in the work of preaching. How was this new body of preachers to be understood

ecclesiologically? In what sense were they ministers, what authority did they have, and what was the meaning of Wesley's act of appointing them? These were inevitable and very crucial questions given the rather specific theories and procedures of ordination and ministry within the Church of England. The Wesleys themselves could claim authority to preach based on their Anglican ordination; their only problem was to justify preaching indiscriminately across England, rather than confining themselves to one parish, and their unorthodox practice of field preaching. John Wesley justified his itinerant ministry on at least two grounds: his Oxford fellowship gave him license to teach anywhere, and the results themselves justified his actions. "I did far more good," he said, "by preaching three days on my father's tomb than I did by preaching three years in his pulpit."[172] To critics who said he should stay put in one parish only, he responded: "I look upon all the world as my parish; thus far I mean, that in whatever part of it I am I judge it meet, right, and my bounden duty to declare, unto all that are willing to hear, the glad tidings of salvation."[173]

But Wesley's preachers were unordained. What right did *they* have to preach, and what right did Wesley have to appoint them? Wesley's view of ministry and ordination had to address this question.

Here as elsewhere, Wesley's concern and problem was to remain faithful to Scripture, the early church, and the Church of England while moving effectively to meet the opportunities for ministry that were opening before him. How could he explain his ministry and his measures not only to himself and to his critics, but also to his growing band of lay preachers?

Wesley insisted that he was appointing *preachers,* not *pastors,* and that his appointment was not ordination to the priesthood. Yet he saw his action as consistent with Anglican church order and with early church practice.

Wesley thought he saw in Scripture and the early church a distinction between two kinds of Christian ministers which corresponded to the difference between ordained Anglican priests and Methodist lay preachers — and that would legitimize both. One order of ministers had responsibility to preach and evangelize; the other to give pastoral care, administer the sacraments, and ordain. Thus Wesley explained in his sermon "The Ministerial Office,"

> So the great High-Priest of our profession sent Apostles and

> Evangelists to proclaim glad tidings to all the world; and then Pastors, Preachers, and Teachers, to build up in the faith the congregations that should be founded. But I do not find that ever the office of an Evangelist was the same with that of a Pastor, frequently called a Bishop. He presided over the flock, and administered the sacraments: The former assisted him, and preached the word, either in one or more congregations. I cannot prove from any part of the New Testament, or from any author of the three first centuries, that the office of Evangelist gave any man a right to act as a Pastor or Bishop. I believe these offices were considered as quite distinct from each other till the time of Constantine.[174]

But with the fall of the Church under Constantine, the situation was greatly altered:

> It soon grew common for one man to take the whole charge of a congregation in order to engross the whole pay. Hence the same person acted as Priest and Prophet, as Pastor and Evangelist. And this gradually spread more and more throughout the whole Christian Church. Yet even at this day, although the same person usually discharges both those offices, yet the office of an Evangelist or Teacher does not imply that of a Pastor, to whom peculiarly belongs the administration of the sacraments . . . .[175]

Applying this to the contemporary situation of Methodist preachers within the Church of England, Wesley saw Methodist innovations as a *return* to New Testament practice. Methodist preachers were to consider themselves "as *extraordinary messengers,* raised up to provoke the *ordinary* ones to jealousy." They were not appointed to "exercise the priestly office" or administer the sacraments, but to preach and evangelize.[176]

While one might recognize more than two orders of ministry, Wesley thought, still the fundamental distinction was between pastor-priests and preacher-evangelists — the former being "ordinary" ministers and the second "extraordinary." This distinction could be seen even in the Old Testament: "It is true *extraordinary prophets* were frequently raised up, who had not been

educated in the 'schools of the prophets,' neither had the outward ordinary call. But we read of no *extraordinary priests.*"[177] And in the New Testament and the early church, one always finds "if not more, at least two orders distinct from each other, the one having the power only to preach and (sometimes) baptize, the other to ordain also and administer the Lord's Supper."[178]

Wesley saw the pastor-priests as the "ordinary," established, institutional ministers of the church while the preacher-evangelists were the "extraordinary" ministers raised up by more immediate divine inspiration somewhat outside institutional channels — and therefore not having the more institutional prerogatives of ordaining and administering the sacraments. Thus he says in the early church,

> Both the evangelists and deacons preached, Yea, and women when under extraordinary inspiration. Then both their sons and their daughter prophesied, although in ordinary cases it was not permitted to 'a woman to speak in the church.' But we do not read in the New Testament that any evangelist or deacon administered the Lord's Supper; much less that any woman administered it, even when speaking by extraordinary inspiration, that inspiration which authorized them for the one not authorizing them for the other. Meanwhile we do read in all the earliest accounts . . . . that none but the president or ruling presbyter ever administered the Lord's Supper.[179]

Both orders of ministers were constituted such by the Holy Spirit, however, "for no man or number of men upon earth can constitute an overseer, bishop, or any other Christian minister. To do this is the peculiar work of the Holy Ghost."[180]

Wesley was willing to admit the traditional threefold distinction of bishops, presbyters (or priests), and deacons, but he saw little basic difference between bishops and presbyters. Baker notes,

> By 1755 Wesley was quite convinced that in essence there were two orders of ministry, with the higher order (which alone was empowered to administer the sacraments and to ordain) subdivided into bishops and presbyters. He completely rejected the notion that there was only one order

> authorized to preach and to administer [the sacraments].[181]

In 1747 Wesley indicated that "the three orders of Bishop, Priests and Deacons" were plainly evident in the New Testament, but not prescribed for all ages. Rather, there must be "numberless accidental varieties in the government of various churches." "For, as God variously dispenses His gifts of nature, providence, and grace, both the offices themselves and the officers in each ought to be varied from time to time.[182] Similarly in a letter of 1745 Wesley wrote, "We believe that the threefold order of ministers . . . is not only authorized by its apostolical institution, but also by the written word."[183]

Wesley recognized bishops and priests as constituting an "outward priesthood" in the Church.

> We believe there is, and always was, in every Christian Church (whether dependent on the Bishop of Rome or not), an outward priesthood, ordained by Jesus Christ, and an outward sacrifice offered therein by men authorized to act as ambassadors of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.[184]

He still considered the priesthood as a vehicle of sacramental grace, but he rejected the Tridentine dogma that ordination itself is a sacrament or that it confers an indelible character.[185] He came to see the priesthood not as primarily mediatorial, but as representative. Baker notes,

> . . . although he never discarded the terms 'outward sacrifice' and 'outward priesthood' he came to interpret the Lord's Supper as a corporate spiritual action performed by one whom the church had appointed for that purpose. Eventually he used 'presbyter' or 'elder' in preference to 'priest' because of the latter's sacerdotal overtones. Nevertheless, he continued to refer to his own 'sacerdotal office,' and at the 1755 conference insisted that there was a New Testament priesthood and sacrifice, though this was not a propitiatory sacrifice.[186]

This view of Christian ministry as divided fundamentally into an "outward priesthood" empowered to ordain and administer the

sacraments and an order of "extraordinary ministers" empowered to preach and evangelize functioned for Wesley in two ways. On the one hand, it was his justification before Anglican critics of the appointing of Methodist lay preachers. On the other hand, it was his argument before his preachers for refusing to allow them to administer the sacraments or assume other prerogatives of the Anglican clergy. Wesley wanted at all costs to keep this distinction clear and permanent, for it was the key to Methodism's remaining a movement *within* the Church of England, rather than a separate denomination. As long as Methodist preachers could not give the sacraments, Methodists would have to go to the Anglican service; as long as they could not ordain, there could be no Methodist preachers except those whom Wesley himself appointed. This is precisely what Wesley wished and intended. In his sermon on "The Ministerial Office" Wesley insisted that he had appointed Methodist preachers "as Prophets, not as Priests. We received them wholly and solely to preach, not to administer the sacraments."[187]

Since Wesley saw no essential difference between a bishop and a priest, he felt that, Biblically, he had as much right to ordain as did a bishop — although for the sake of order, and to prevent Methodist separation, he was very reluctant to ordain. In letters to Charles in later years he said he was convinced he was "a scriptural ἐπίσκοπος as much as any man in England or in Europe,"[188] and that he had as much right to ordain as to administer the Sacrament. "But I see abundance of reasons why I should not use that right, unless I was turned out of the Church."[189]

But Wesley did, in fact, eventually ordain ministers for American Methodism. This, of course, caused considerable controversy and required explanation. As early as 1755 Wesley admitted that in appointing Methodist preachers he had already in some sense ordained. Later he justified his ordinations for America on the two grounds of Biblical authority and practical necessity. He could earlier have ordained the Methodist preachers in England, but this was unnecessary and would have separated Methodists from the Church of England. "But the case is widely different between England and North America," he said. In America there was no one to administer the sacraments to Methodist converts. "Here, therefore, my scruples are at an end; and I conceive myself at full liberty, as I violate no order and invade no man's right by appointing and sending labourers into the harvest."[190]

In this view of ministry and ordination, Wesley thought he was being at once faithful to Scripture and early church tradition, consistent with a proper understanding of Anglican doctrine, and, above all, obedient to the Gospel in seeing to it that the Word was preached as freely and widely as possible. He thought he had found a way to justify both Methodism with its preachers and the institution of the Church of England with its clergy.

Stoeffler believes that Wesley's actions and writings are best explained against the background of Wesley's contacts with Moravianism and the *collegio pietatis* of Continental Pietists. Though Wesley's view of ministry may seem ambiguous. Stoeffler argues that "the ambiguities recede into the background if it is remembered that his view of the ministry is related to a conscious adaptation on his part of the *collegia pietatis* arrangement of the church-related Pietists on the continent, especially as it was observed among the Moravians."[191] While one may question whether Wesley was consciously imitating or adapting Moravian and Pietist ideas and models, he clearly saw Methodism and its ministry as an evangelical order within the Church of England — in effect, as an *ecclesiola.* And he could hardly have failed to be influenced by what he saw of Moravian and Pietist models on the continent.

Space does not permit an extended discussion of Wesley's views on the sacraments, but a few comments may be made to indicate Wesley's general approach. We have already seen how the question of the use of the sacraments as means of grace was central in the contoversy between Molther and Wesley leading to Wesley's separation from the Fetter Lane Society in 1740.

Wesley's sacramentalism is well-known, and he seems most Anglican precisely at this point. But his sacramentalism, like other aspects of his theology and practice, was a modified Anglican position strongly influenced by Wesley's evangelical convictions.

Stoeffler is probably right that Wesley's spiritual renewal in 1738 "had less of an impact on his understanding of the nature and meaning of the sacraments than on any other aspect of his theology."[192] Yet one notes a significant difference of emphasis between Wesley's Oxford days and the years following 1738.

For Wesley, the sacraments were best understood, along with prayer and Bible reading, as "means of grace." "By 'means of grace,'" Wesley said, "I understand outward signs, words, or actions, ordained of God, and appointed to this end, to be the ordinary channels whereby he might convey to men, preventing, justifying, or sanctifying grace."[193] To call the sacraments "means of grace" suggested both the utility and limitation of such ordinances. They must be respected and used, for they conveyed God's grace. But they were only instruments; they were means, not ends. As the primitive church lost its earlier purity, the means became mistaken for ends.[194] Wesley believed the sacraments, especially the Lord's Supper, were necessary "if not to the *being,* at least to the *well-being* of a Church."[195]

With Wesley's own spiritual renewal, the ordinances of the church became infused with the living power of the Spirit. Wesley's practice, and to a large extent his theory, of the sacraments varied little from 1725 to the end of his life. But the point of emphasis came increasingly to be on the Spirit of God working *through* the sacraments. Thus he wrote,

> . . . all outward means whatever, if separate from the Spirit of God, cannot profit at all, cannot conduce, in any degree, either to the knowledge or love of God. . . . Whosoever, therefore, imagines there is any intrinsic power in any means whatsoever, does greatly err.[196]

God is able, said Wesley, to work with or without means. It is the blood of Christ which makes propitiation for sin.[197] Yet the means are useful, and "all who desire the grace of God are to wait for it in the means which he hath ordained; in using, not in laying them aside."[198] One should wait for God in the way he has ordained, "expecting that he will meet me there, because he has promised so to do."[199] One should "use all means *as means;* as ordained, not for their own sake, but in order to the renewal of your soul in righteousness and true holiness. If, therefore, they actually tend to do this, well; but if not, they are dung and dross."[200]

For Wesley, the Lord's Supper was a "preventing, justifying and sanctifying ordinance." That is, it drew a person to God and was instrumental in his justification and sanctification. Thus it was useful and needful at every stage in one's life. Baker notes,

> Wesley continued to regard communion as a converting as well as a confirming ordinance. Although he welcomed penitent sinners to his own communion services, however, he was not prepared to admit all and sundry. . . . Wesley never shook off his conviction that for the sake of decency and order, if not for validity and effectiveness, the Lord's Supper must be administered by an ordained clergyman.[201]

Thus the sacraments are for all who are seeking God, not just for the truly converted. The only essential preparation or qualification is a sense of worthlessness — trusting in nothing but God's grace alone.

The Lord's Supper may properly be called a sacrifice, according to Wesley, but in a very specific sense:

> 'But is there any priest or any sacrifice under the New Testament?' As sure as there was under the Old. The 'unbloody sacrifice' of wine and oil and fine flour was one of the most solemn which was then offered, in the place of which and [of] all the other Jewish sacrifices is the one *Christian sacrifice* of bread and wine. This also the ancients termed 'the unbloody sacrifice'. . . . And he that offers this as a memorial of the death of Christ is as proper a priest as ever Melchisedec was.
>
> If it be asked, 'But is this a propitiatory sacrifice?' I answer, 'No.' Nor were there every [sic] any such among the Jews. There never was or can be more than one such sacrifice, that offered by 'Jesus Christ the righteous.'[202]

Wesley's view of baptism was similar but somewhat more ambiguous due to his emphasis on infant baptism. He felt that in baptism a "principle of grace is infused," and was able to say, "Baptism doth now save us, if we live answerable thereto; if we repent, believe, and obey the gospel: Supposing this, as it admits us into the Church here, so into glory hereafter."[203]

Wesley distinguished between infant baptism and adult baptism, coming close to affirming baptismal regeneration in infants but not in adults. He said of his own experience, "I believe, till I was about ten years old, I had not sinned away that 'washing of the Holy Spirit' which was given me in baptism."[204] He held that infants should be

baptized because they are guilty of original sin; baptism washes away original sin; and infants can come to Christ by no other means.[205] He felt that children baptized in infancy were at that time born again, and that this was presupposed in the *Book of Common Prayer.* But in the case of adults, at least, a person might be born of water but not yet, or necessarily, of the Spirit.[206] This view is illustrated pungently in a 1739 entry in Wesley's *Journal:*

> I baptized John Smith, . . . and four other adults, at Islington. Of the adults I have known baptized lately, one only was at that time born again, in the full sense of the word; that is, found a thorough, inward change, by the love of God filling her heart. Most of them were only born again in a lower sense, *i.e.* received the remission of their sins; and some, (as it has since too plainly appeared,) neither in one sense nor the other.[207]

Summary

In his view of the Church, its role in history, its structure, ministry, and sacraments, Wesley reveals an essentially Anglican position, modified and vivified by his own spiritual experience after Aldersgate and by his experiences at the front of a rapidly-expanding spiritual movement. The striking thing about Wesley's ecclesiology is that it did *not* undergo a radical transformation after the critical years of 1738-39, but changed very little. Still, the changes were of crucial significance — parallel to his personal appropriation of justifying faith through which doctrines mentally accepted became living realities in his own experience.

But the changes in Wesley' ecclesiology, as we have seen, were part of a gradual evolution and shift in emphasis which began as early as 1730 and continued through the early years of the revival. Little or no change seems to have occurred in Wesley's view of the church after about 1750.

The significance of these changes, and the extent to which they placed Wesley in the Believers' Church tradition, are the subject of the final article of this series.

Footnotes

[113]Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England,* p. 2.

[114]Stoeffler, p. 301. Through Hooker Wesley was to some extent influenced by Thomism. "The defense he [Hooker] offered for the role of redeemed reason . . . has

since provided many members of the Church of England with a theological method which has combined the claims of revelation, reason, and history," J. D. Douglas, ed., *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church, p. 482.*

[115]Albert C. Outler *in Dow Kirkpatrick, ed., The Doctrine of the Church* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1964), p. 14. Cf. John Jewel, *An Apology of the Church of England* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1963).

[116]Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England,* p. 16.

[117]Stoeffler, p. 301.

[118]Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England, p. 49.*

[119]*Ibid.,* p. 48.

[120]*Ibid.,* p. 149.

[121]Robert C. Monk, *John Wesley: His Puritan Heritage* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1966), p. 196.

[122]See Peter King, *An Inquiry into the Constitution, Discipline, Unity, and Worship of the Primitive Church* (New York: G. Lane and P. P. Sanford, 1841).

[123]Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England,* p. 145; Colin W. Williams, *John Wesley's Theology Today* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1960), pp. 220-21.

[124]Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England,* p. 145.

[125]*Ibid.,* p. 146.

[126]*Ibid.,* p. 151.

[127]*Ibid.,* p. 137.

[128]Sermon, "The Ministerial Office," *Works* (Zondervan ed.), VII, p. 279.

[129]*Minutes of the Methodist Conferences, 1744 to 1798,* pp. 35-36. Quoted in Monk, p. 195.

[130]Quoted in Stoeffler, p. 300.

[131]*Explanatory Notes on the New Testament* (London: Epworth Press, 1958), pp. 680 (Gal. 1:13), 430 (Acts 9:31), 850 (Heb. 12:23).

[132]*Ibid.,* p. 411.

[133]*Works* (Zondervan ed.), VI, p. 371.

[134]*Ibid.*

[135]*Ibid.,* p. 372.

[136]*Works* (Zondervan ed.), X, p. 82.

[137]"An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion," *Works* (Oxford ed.), XI, p. 77.

[138]*Ibid.,* Wesley makes the same point in "Of the Church," *Works* (1856 ed.), VI, pp. 374-75.

[139]*Works* (1856 ed.), VI, p. 375.

[140]*Ibid.*

[141]*Works* (1856 ed.), VI, p. 375.

[142]*Works* (Oxford ed.), XI, p. 518.

[143]Outler in Kirkpatrick, *The Doctrine of the Church,* p. 19.

[144]*Works* (Zondervan ed.), III, p. 42.

[145]*Works* (1856 ed.), VI, p. 378.

[146]*Works* (Zondervan ed.), III, p. 42.

[147]Stoeffler, p. 311.

[148]Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England,* pp. 49-50.

[149]Stoeffler, p. 305.

[150]Durnbaugh, p. 219. I have been unable to find corroborating evidence for this link

between Arnold and Wesley.

[151]*Ibid.*, pp. 11, 122; Franklin H. Littell, *The Anabaptist View of the Church,* 2nd ed. rev. (Boston: Starr King Press, 1958), pp. 152, 212.

[152]Littell, *The Anabaptist View of the Church, 152.*

[153]*Works* (1856 ed.), VI, pp. 246-47.

[154]*Ibid.*, p. 245.

[155]*Works* (Zondervan ed.), XI, p. 485.

[156]*Works* (Oxford ed.), XI, pp. 213-50.

[157]Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England,* p. 152.

[158]*Works* (Zondervan ed.), III, pp. 44-45.

[159]Stoeffler, p. 311; Baker, John Wesley and the Church of England, p. 152.

[159]Stoeffler, p. 311; Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England,* p. 152.

[160]Quoted in Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England,* p. 150.

[161]Letter to "John Smith," July 10, 1747; *Letters,* II, p. 98.

[162]Sermon LXXXV. Quoted in Edward H. Sugden, ed., *Wesley's Standard Sermons* (London: The Epworth Press, 1968), I, p. 141.

[163]Sermon, "The Great Assize," *Wesley's Standard Sermons,* II, p. 419.

[164]Sermon, "The Way to the Kingdom," *Wesley's Standard Sermons,* I, p. 150.

[165]Sermon, "The Reformation of Manners," *Wesley's Standard Sermons,* II, pp. 482-83.

[166]Wood, p. 272.

[167]*Ibid.*, p. 275.

[168]Sermon, "The Marks of the New Birth," *Wesley's Standard Sermons,* I, pp. 293-94.

[169]Wesley, *Explanatory Notes on the New Testament;* notes on Mt. 11:5 and Lk. 7:22.

[170]Sermon, "The Reformation of Manners," *Wesley's Standard Sermons,* II, p. 489.

[171]Wood, p. 275.

[172]Quoted in Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England,* p. 150.

[173]Letter to James Hervey, March 20, 1739. Quoted and discussed in Wood, pp. 105-06.

[174]*Works* (Zondervan ed.), VII, pp. 275-76.

[175]*Ibid.*, p. 276.

[176]*Ibid.*, p. 277.

[177]John Wesley, "Ought We to Separate from the Church of England?" Printed as appendix in Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England,* p. 332, Written by Wesley in 1755.

[178]*Ibid.*, p. 333.

[179]*Ibid.*

[180]Comment on Acts 20:28, *Explanatory Notes on the New Testament,* pp. 478-79. Baker notes that Wesley originally had written, "For no man or number of men upon earth can constitute an 'Overseer,' Bishop, or any other Christian Minister, *unless as a bare instrument in God's hands."* This is how the proof copy of the first edition of the *Explanatory Notes* reads. But Wesley deleted the qualifying phrase (beginning with "unless") from the proof copy. See Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England,* p. 155. Cf. Wesley's comment on Acts 13:2-3, where he interprets the laying of hands on Paul and Barnabas not as ordination but as public induction into service which God had previously appointed.

[181]Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England,* p. 153.

[182]*Minutes of the Methodist Conferences, 1744-1798,* pp. 35-36. Quoted in Monk,

p. 195.

[183]*Journal* (1909 ed.), III, p. 230.

[184]*Ibid.*

[185]Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England,* p. 152.

[186]*Ibid.*

[187]*Works* (Zondervan ed.), VII, p. 277.

[188]Letter of August 19, 1785, *Letters* (Telford ed.), VII, p. 284.

[189]Letter of June 8, 1780, *Letters* (Telford ed.), VI, p. 21.

[190]Letter of Sept. 10, 1784, *Letters* (Telford ed.), VII, p. 238. Most Anglican bishops had left North America at the outbreak of the Revolution.

[191]Stoeffler, p. 310.

[192]*Ibid.,* p. 312.

[193]Sermon, "The Means of Grace," *Works* (1856 ed.), V, p. 176.

[194]*Ibid.,* p. 174.

[195]"An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion," *Works* (Oxford ed.), XI, p. 78.

[196]"The Means of Grace," *Works* (1856 ed.), V, p. 177.

[197]*Ibid.*

[198]*Ibid.,* p. 178.

[199]*Ibid.,* p. 184.

[200]*Ibid.,* p. 189.

[201]Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England,* pp. 157-58.

[202]"Ought We to Separate . " in Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England,* p. 333.

[203]"A Treatise on Baptism," *Works* (Zondervan ed.), X, p. 192.

[204]*Journal* (1827 ed.), I, p. 93. (1738).

[205]Irwin Reist, "John Wesley's View of the Sacraments: A Study in the Historical Development of a Doctrine," *Wesleyan Theological Journal,* 6:1 (Spring, 1971), p. 48. Baker notes:

> Baptism in infancy Wesley supported because it was instituted by Jesus and because it was the successor of the Old Testament rite of infant circumcision. He continued to believe that in some way objective grace was conferred upon the child by God, so that in a sense it was regenerated, or at least the process of regeneration was begun. At the same time he insisted that another form of regeneration was possible in adult experience quite apart from any sacramental rite. These two aspects of regeneration he never quite reconciled, but continued to insist on both. The classical summary of Wesley's teaching on baptismal regeneration remains his *Treatise on Baptism,* and on non-baptismal regeneration his sermon on 'The New Birth,' first published in 1760, though probably preached much earlier. (*John Wesley and the Church of England,* p. 156).

[206]John Chongnahm Cho, "John Wesley's View on Baptism," *Wesleyan Theological Journal,* 7:1 (Spring, 1972), pp. 62-65.

[207]*Journal* (1827 ed.), I, pp. 165-66.

Bibliography

Several rather significant new studies of Wesley have appeared within the last few years, all of which are relevant to the question of Wesley's ecclesiology or to the practical working-out of that ecclesiology. Albert C. Outler's excellent compendium of Wesley's writings, entitled *John Wesley* (1964), contains extensive introductory material and notes. Frank Baker has provided a very thorough, scholarly, and yet readable study of Wesley's churchmanship in his *John Wesley and the Church of England* (1970) which is especially helpful for tracing the wide range of influences on Wesley's thought. A little-noted aspect of the Methodist experience — that of suffering — has been dealt with by D. Dunn Wilson in his *Many Waters Cannot Quench: A Study of the Sufferings of Eighteenth-Century Methodism and Their Significance for John Wesley and the First Methodists* (1969). Although I have not used Wilson's study in this paper, it is important because it shows that the early Methodists did undergo considerable suffering on several counts; and this, in turn, is important for contemporary students of Wesley in order that the full meaning of what it meant for a person to associate himself intimately with the Methodists in Wesley's day not be missed.

The historian Bernard Semmel has done a great service to Wesleyan studies in translating and editing Elie Halevy's essays on the origins of Methodism in *The Birth of Methodism in England* (1971). Halevy, author of *England in 1815,* suggested many years ago that the influence of the Wesleyan Revival among the English masses prevented a French-style political revolution in eighteenth-century England. His analysis and his hypothesis have often not been fully understood, however, and the two essays which Semmel has translated from the French have been little known in the English-speaking world. Semmel has attempted to re-evaluate Halevy's thesis in his significant historical study, *The Methodist Revolution* (1973).

Finally, Ernst Stoeffler has presented a suggestive and well-reasoned study of Wesley's ecclesiology in his recent "Tradition and Renewal in the Ecclesiology of John Wesley" (1976).

The literature on Wesley is, of course, very extensive. I have not

been able to survey all of it, but have used as many studies as I could find and gain access to which bore on the question at hand. I have included a few works in the bibliography which I have not been able to examine, but which clearly would have some relevance to Wesley's ecclesiology.

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Appendix: A Sevenfold Believers' Church Typology

The typology used in this paper is based primarily on Durnbaugh, Estep, Bender, Littell, Williams, and Yoder, as noted.

The Believers' Church is primarily "Christianity as discipleship." As a type or model distilled somewhat artificially from its various historical manifestations, it demonstrates most basically seven characteristics. Below are listed the seven elements, accompanied by descriptive phrases from the authors noted. The typology was arrived at deductively, based primarily on the elements noted by these authors.

1) *Voluntary adult membership based on a covenant-commitment to Jesus Christ, emphasizing obedience to Jesus as necessary evidence of faith in Him.*

Voluntary membership of those confessing Jesus Christ as Lord — (Durnbaugh).

The covenant is made between God and themselves and with each other to live faithfully as disciples of Christ — (Durnbaugh).

Membership is voluntary and witting — (Littell).

Free, voluntary membership — (Yoder).

Gathered church of committed believers — (Williams).

Those personally claimed by Christ — (Littell).

2) *A community or brotherhood of discipline, edification,*

correction, and mutual aid, in conscious separation from the world, as the primary visible expression of the Church.

Faithful admonition and edification — (Durnbaugh).

Mutual aid and responsibility — (Durnbaugh).

Separation from the world — (Durnbaugh, Littell).

Mutual correction, support, and abiding hope — (Williams).

Disciplined community — (Williams).

Disciplines applied to members — (Yoder).

Internal integrity and church discipline — (Littell).

The church is visible . . . a brotherhood — (Yoder).

The church as a brotherhood of committed believers — (H. Bender).

Discipleship, conceived in terms of Christian community — (Littell).

The empirical church as primarily a fellowship . . . of the regenerate — (Estep).

3) *A life of good works, service, and witness, as an expression of Christian love and obedience, incumbent on all believers — thus an emphasis on the ministry of the laity, rather than of a special ministerial church as "a missionary minority."*

Discipleship as implying evangelism, ethics, and social action; love as the only adequate motivation of the Christian life — (Estep).

The Church is missionary — (Yoder).

A new ethic of love — (H. Bender).

Perform Christian works; higher level of life than the common man — (Durnbaugh).

Mission and witness — (Littell).

4) *The Spirit and the Word as comprising the sole basis of authority, implying a de-emphasis on or rejection of church tradition and creeds.*

The Word given in the scriptures and apprehended through the Holy Spirit provides the sole authority — (Durnbaugh).

The Church is led by the Spirit and the Word — (Yoder).

An appeal to the New Testament as the ultimate authority in the church — (Estep).

An openness to truth under the Spirit's direction — (Estep).

An acceptance of the theology of the ancient symbols with a corresponding rejection of all creeds — (Estep).

5) Primitivism and Restitutionism — belief in the normative nature of the early church, with an attempt to restore the essential elements of early church life and practice.

Primitivism, or the principle of restoration of the apostolic pattern — (Estep). (Littell sees this as the most basic element in the Believers' Church concept).

6) *A pragmatic, functional approach to church order and structure.*

Neither complete formalism nor complete spontaneity; forms evolve from the group, and can be changed if need be — (Durnbaugh).

7) *A belief in the universal Church as the Body of Christ.*

The true church is representative of the claims of the

Universal Church in one place — (Littell).

Book Reviews

God, Man and Salvation; A Biblical Theology, by W. P. Purkiser, Richard F. Taylor, and Willard H. Taylor. Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press, 1977. 732 pp.

This volume on biblical theology is a timely one. The Old Testament section is divided into such matters as creation and the covenant, devotion and duty, and a prophetic vision. The New Testament section deals with God, man, Christ, salvation, the Christian life, "The Society of the Saved," and the future. There is a subject index including Hebrew and Greek terms, an index of authors, a Scripture index, and a bibliography of 17 pages.

The authors are well-known in evangelical circles, all members of the Church of the Nazarene. Dr. Purkiser was the editor of *Herald of Holiness,* while the two Taylors have been for years on the faculty of the Nazarene Theological Seminary.

This volume is a major achievement. The authors make it clear that this is not systematic theology, (hence it is not in competition with H. Orton Wiley's three-volume work on systematic theology). It is biblical theology in the sense that its major concern is to expound Bible doctrines, rather than to react against current issues in theological circles. The authors subscribe to the Wesleyan Arminian interpretation of Scriptures with a special focus on Christian perfection. Indeed, the reader is given an excellent insight into the biblical treatment of entire sanctification and the infilling of the Spirit.

The authors indicate an adequate awareness of contemporary biblical studies, and the more influential writers on the subject. In searching for a theme which unites the Scriptures, after considering others' suggestions, such as the kingdom, or the covenant, or "Salvation History," this trio finds the unifying element of the Scripture simply the theme of *salvation.* It is hard to find fault with this theme as fulfilling the central thrust of the Scriptures, especially as seen in the climactic statment of Revelation 21:3: God and redeemed man living together in atonement.

Some readers may wonder to what extent this is a biblical theology

in distinction from a systematic theology. Is it not rather a systematization of biblical doctrines? For example, they do not deal with doctrines of the Pentateuch as such, nor the doctrines of the wisdom books, or the doctrines of the historical books, or the prophetical books, or the apocalypses. In the New Testament they do not attempt to distinguish between the doctrines of the Synoptic Gospels, the Gospel of John and the Epistles of Paul. While the emphasis on the unity of the Scriptures is to be welcomed, the question may be asked as to whether these authors too easily assume that each Bible writer writes from the same perspective and that one can easily be used to interpret another.

In general, however, the perspective of these writers is remarkably well balanced. For example in the Old Testament they recognize that the prophets who emphasize God's love are those who also stress the divine wrath. The authors also recognize that holiness must be seen against the background of sin, and vice versa. In the discussion of Old Testament theology, the doctrine of the holiness of God is presented very effectively and soundly.

Slightly more than three-fourths of the volume is concerned with the doctrines of the New Testament. Here the emphasis centers upon salvation through Christ. A strong case is made for entire sanctification as a second work of divine grace as distinct from regeneration. This is an important truth often overlooked in biblical theology. The presentation here is thorough and judicious. At times the case seems to be over-stated when the text is utilized without adequate concern for the context. For example, the seventh chapter of Romans is seen as the struggles of the Christian seeking cleansing from all sin. Paul would probably say that his main concern in this chapter was to show the difference between the God-fearing person under law (chapter seven) as distinct from one "in Christ" (chapter eight). Even under the old covenant the Hebrew believer could delight in the law of God in his inner heart, as many of the Psalms express, and still long for the complete freedom to follow the law completely. Wesley believed that chapter seven of Romans described the man outside of Christ. Its language is applicable, of course, to those who are "groaning for full redemption." Although the editors disclaim preoccupation with contemporary theological issues, they constantly indicate an awareness of many contemporary issues and argument is often designed to challenge them. In the treatment of the baptism of the Holy Spirit they are at pains to effectively articulate

the Wesleyan position, but their case may have been stronger if they had come to grips with some of the more recent effective treatments of those holding opposing views, such as the view that the "baptism of the Holy Spirit" *always* indicates initiation.

In the difficult subject of eschatology effective integration of the varying data on this subject is presented. The authors present a moderate position, judicious in their use of materials and willing to leave some questions unanswered. The authors describe the difference in the pre-millennial, a-millennial and post-millennial views, and point out the difficulties in accepting any one view to the exclusion of the others; they leave the question unresolved.

The entire volume is characterized by mature and judicious scholarship. The bringing together of this mass of materials is in itself a herculean task. In the judgment of this reviewer they have succeeded in their purpose, and evangelical scholarship will stand in debt to them for years to come.

Reviewed by
George Allen Turner
Professor of Biblical Literature

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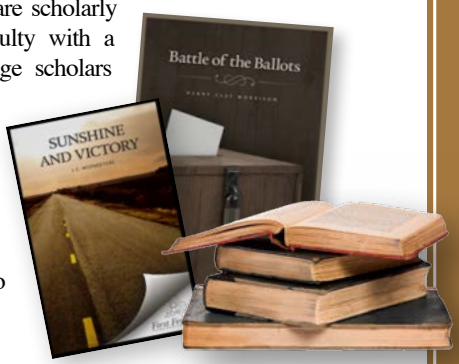

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